

Written: Matthew 22:10-14 Am I Invited and Ready for the Banquet?

Proper 23-19th Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday, October 11th, 2020

Text: Matthew 22:10-14

¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

Exegetical Statement

Jesus addresses this parable to the Chief Priests and the Elders in response to their hearing the Parable of the Tenants describing their sins against the Father, and His Son. Their response is, as the Parable indicates, plotting to kill Jesus. In His continued attempt to call them to repentance He tells the Parable of the Wedding Feast. This feast is the eternal Messianic Banquet described in Isaiah 25:6-9. The invitation comes through the call of the prophets and Jesus Himself to repent and believe. But the Jews dishonor the Father and the Son by passively ignoring the call in favor of their own life pursuits, as well as actively working to stop the invitation and kill the messengers. Their response to these gifts of grace from a loving Father, bring dishonor to both Father and son and anger him so that He responds by totally destroying them and their entire earthly existence. Still the banquet will go on, and the Father desires people to attend. He sends His servants out to invite any and all, to go to the places where the roads from all different directions enter the city. The invitation goes out to all whether they are worthy of it or not. And the banquet hall is filled. As part of this gracious invitation the Father provides the free gift of a wedding garment, since those who have been invited would not have been dressed for the occasion and had no time to go home and do so. By doing this the Father is the one who makes these guests worthy of such an awesome banquet. But as the Father survey's the banquet hall he spies one who is not wearing the wedding garment given with the invitation. When asked why he is not, the man is speechless, because there is no answer as to why anyone would refuse such a free gift. Like those who ignored the message before, this man has also dishonored the Father and the Son with his refusal. And so this man's end will be the same as those before him, cast into the outer darkness of eternal destruction where his eternity will be the weeping of utter hopelessness and the gnashing of teeth that accompanies pain, and rage. The moral of the story is that although many (all) are invited, only those who wear the free gift of the wedding garment are chosen to stay forever.

Focus Statement:

Jesus came to provide the invitation that welcomes all people to the eternal banquet. His life, death, and resurrection is what makes any and all worthy to attend such an awesome banquet as Isaiah 25:6-9 describes. You were made ready by your baptism and are kept ready by repentance fueled by the Gospel.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Some people believe they can ignore the Gospel invitation and the free gift of righteousness that it provides. They believe they can choose to live their own existence on earth as they have been. But that existence will come to an end, and all who are not welcomed into the eternal banquet will experience eternal destruction and torment. Others may worry that they will not be prepared for the banquet and they themselves will be cast out.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Believe the promise of the Absolution that in baptism you were given the righteousness of Christ and the Spirit who keeps you in Christ. He makes you ready for the banquet that will commence when Jesus returns. No one can take away that righteousness from you. But since we can, with dogged persistence take it off, we allow the Spirit to keep us clothed through the means of grace.

Subject Sentence: The Gospel Invitation makes and keeps you ready

Introduction: Nightmares Involving Banquets and Parties

Have you ever attended a party or thrown one yourself where you expected a lot of friends and relatives to show up, but hardly anyone does? How did it feel? It's embarrassing and heartbreaking. It can make you angry when you put so much effort and work into the celebration, but no one found it important enough to come. For me, it's embarrassing, even if I'm not the one who threw the party but just one of the few attenders. I feel so bad for the host.

Lost in our culture today is the reason why we should attend parties and celebrations thrown in honor of someone or some life event. We don't attend because it's the best thing we could be doing that evening. We don't attend because we expect the food to make it an event to remember or the entertainment to be unsurpassable. We attend out of love, honor, and respect for the one throwing the party and the person who is being honored by it.

Have you ever attended a party only to find out you weren't really invited? When I was in High School my best friend called me up and was looking for a ride to my girlfriend's party that night. That she was having a party was news to me. But I figured I had done the typical man thing; she had told me, and I wasn't listening. Too focused on the football game or perhaps it was the tunes I had cranked too loud in the car. When we showed up and walked through the door, a kind of hush fell over the assembled group. And I saw a look of surprise and shock on some of the faces, including my girlfriend's. It seems I didn't know about this party because she purposefully hadn't invited me. In my place she had invited her new boyfriend who she hadn't told me about yet. A wave of heavy emotion hit me like a bulldozer: shock, surprise, anger, hurt, and a deep kind of embarrassment. I felt like a loser. I exited as quick as I could, leaving my best friend to find his own ride home.

In the Parable Jesus tells today we see two different reactions to those who are invited to the king's wedding banquet: those who ignore it, and one who thinks he is welcome when he really is not. And for both groups, the end of the story stands in direct contrast to what those who remain at the banquet get to enjoy. When we tie this together with our Old Testament Lesson from Isaiah, we understand that the banquet in Jesus' Parable illustrates the Messianic Banquet, the foretaste of the feast to come, in other words Eternal Life. Is there any chance you would ignore the invitation to the Eternal Banquet? Is there any chance that you are not invited? That you are not welcome?

Jesus' Parable of The Wedding Feast

Jesus tells this parable in response to the Chief Priests and Elders scheming and plotting to kill Him. They are angry because of several earlier parables through which Jesus is calling them to repentance. In the Parable that was our Gospel Reading last Sunday Jesus likened these religious leaders to tenants in the vineyard that was built, supplied, and blessed by God. God had given them all they had, including their position of authority. They responded by ignoring His call to produce the fruits of a repentant heart. Instead they considered themselves right with God because of their works. Jesus brings the meaning home when he tells of the Son of the Vineyard Owner whom the tenants will take outside the Vineyard and kill. This is aimed at these very men who are plotting to kill Jesus because He claims to be that very Son represented in the parable. But instead of seeing their sin and repenting, they grow angrier and continue plotting to end Jesus ministry and life.

But despite their animosity Jesus loves them. He continues His call to repentance by telling them and all assembled today's Parable that describes the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven now, and its fulfillment to come. He tells about a king who threw a grand wedding banquet for his son. The king in this parable is The Heavenly Father, and the Son is Jesus' Himself. The banquet is the eternal celebration in the presence of the Father for all who believe. The banquet is a most grand affair. It is not something they should begrudgingly attend as loyal subjects. It's the best food and drink. It's the eternal banquet described in our Old Testament Lesson. And the Chief Priests, the Elders, as well as all who are listening to Jesus have been invited. Jesus came to earth as the Son of God taking on human flesh, so that He could bring this invitation to them: repent and believe in the Gospel.

But these Jewish religious leaders, as well as most of Jerusalem by Good Friday, will lose interest in this invitation. They have no desire to repent. They are happy living their lives now and do not want to change. Some find Jesus call not worthy of their time. Others are offended by the thought that they need to repent. They know they are right with God by their works. They see Jesus' teaching as blasphemy and that He needs to be stopped and destroyed. They are plotting the same end suffered by the prophets of the Old Testament who called God's people to repent: to turn from their sin and turn in faith to God to be right with Him. Not wanting to hear it Israel silenced them by killing them.

Their actions are not just an offense against Jesus, they are an offense against the Father Himself who, out of unconditional love provides this wonderful feast for those who are really not worthy of it. Those who refuse the invitation, and therefore refuse to repent throughout their entire lives, will commit the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit who is calling them to repentance. And for that they will earn destruction. This will be partially fulfilled in 20 years or so when the Roman Army invades and destroys Jerusalem. It will find its complete fulfillment on the Last Day. Just as the king in Jesus parable sent his armies to destroy the subjects who refused to come, on the Last Day King Jesus will send His angelic armies and they will cast all who refused the invitation into eternal destruction.

That Last Day is still to come. And even though the Jews by and large will refuse the invitation, the banquet is still a go. The Father doesn't need people to come because he is lonely. It's His great love for all men that moves Him to invite the whole world to come, both Jews and Gentiles alike. He sends His messengers, His apostles, and after them His Church, including you and I, to go out to the places where people gather and share the invitation of the Gospel. It doesn't matter what race they are. It doesn't matter whether they are good or bad people. All are invited.

Fast forward to the Last Day. The banquet is prepared, and the guests are taking their place around the table. The King comes in to check out the assembled crowd and spies a man who is not dressed appropriately. He is not wearing the wedding garment that was given as part of the invitation to the banquet. This was a necessary gift since when people were called, they were dressed in normal clothes and had no time to go home and change. On their own they were not dressed for such a glorious banquet. This man was given the garment but is refusing to wear it. The king approaches him and asks him why. He has no answer to give, because in the face of the king who is the righteous judge there is no answer, no reason to refuse this free gift. Just like the Religious Leaders of Jesus day, this man thought that he was good enough in what he had on, so that he didn't need the gift that Jesus provides in the Gospel Message. But he was very wrong.

Now when something like this happens at a dinner party, especially a fancy affair such as this one, the offender would be escorted out of the room as quickly and quietly as possible. Once out of public view he would be dealt with. But the king, in front of all the invited guests who are watching, all of whom are dressed appropriately, orders his banquet attendees to bind the man hand and foot and throw him out the door. Now, instead of enjoying the light, comfort, and joyful festivities of the banquet, he is cast into outer darkness. This is a darkness that is beyond that which you find yourself up north at night when there is no moon. In this darkness the man will weep uncontrollably because he has lost all hope. There he will gnash his teeth in anger and in physical, emotional, and spiritual torment, realizing what he has lost, and what those in the banquet hall will continue to enjoy forever. All the while he will suffer in outer darkness forever.

Application For Us Today

Jesus tells this parable not just to the Jews of the first century. It has important application for you and me here in the year 21st century. The Gospel invitation continues to go out, and people continue to ignore it. Some ignore it because of other things in their life they see as more important. They are concentrating on making their life now the eternal banquet on this earth, or as close to it as they can get. The idea that there is a blissful afterlife is superstitious nonsense for the feeble minded. And there are those who are so offended by the call to repentance that they react in anger. They are especially offended when that call involves turning away from a lifestyle they love, which Scripture calls sin. They say "Who are you O Christian to judge how I live as being wrong; as being evil! God is a god of love

and toleration; that is my God". So, they try to silence our voice by any means necessary, even dishonoring us and sometimes even attacking us verbally if not physically. But they are actually attacking and dishonoring the God whom we serve. And on the Last Day Jesus' angels will give them what they have coming.

Others hear the invitation and the description of the Messianic banquet and make plans to be there. But the call to repent and live in obedience to God's law is not how they look to get there. Like the religious leaders of Jesus day, they believe the clothes they have on are sufficient for entrance into the banquet hall. They believe their good works pleases God and these works are their ticket for entrance. For others the entrance price is Jesus plus works, because they believe they have to do something to earn it. But on that last day they too will have the same look of surprise and horror on their face as the man in Jesus' Parable. Works plus Jesus means they are not trusting in Jesus alone. That kind of garment won't fly, and they will be cast into the outer darkness.

Will You Be Welcomed into Jesus' Banquet?

What about each one of you? Will you be in that banquet hall on the Last Day? On that day there will be only two destinations. Eternal destruction or the Eternal Messianic banquet. There is no 3rd option for the undecided or uninterested. Since you are here listening to this message instead of falling asleep, playing on your phones, or rising up and trying to stop me from preaching, I can safely assume you are not like the first group of people in the Parable.

But what about the man who was found by the king to have no wedding garment on? Could that possibly be you? The wedding garment represents all that would make the man worthy of entrance into this banquet and allow him to stay forever. This Eternal Banquet is the place where, as Isaiah 25:6-9 describes, the veil of sin and death has been swallowed up and removed. In this banquet hall there is no room for dirty filthy sinners. And that is the reality of your life and mine at times. Is there any chance that the Father would walk up to you and command His angels to cast you out? Absolutely not!

That wedding garment is the same as the white robe of righteousness we hear in **Isaiah 61:10 "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."** It is not something you or I could make or possess. It comes as gift of God who not only gives it to us but puts it on us, clothes us with it. It represents the right standing we have before the Father as the gift of Jesus Christ from the cross. He earned it for us with His perfect life. He was always in right standing with the Father, He never did anything that caused the Father to be angry with Him. Yet He died as one who had offended the Father in the worst way. That's because Jesus took from us all our offenses, all the dirty filthy rags that we wear which is our sins.

He took them and died for them. He separated those sins from us as far as east is from west. When God looks at you, He no longer sees your sins from your youth, from 5 years ago, or even from 5 minutes ago. They are gone. Instead He sees Christ's perfect obedience, given to you in the Gospel, poured out upon you in your baptism. The sin that you and I still commit is covered over by Jesus gift of that white robe of righteousness. It's the right standing you have now before the Father despite your sin.

And you are wearing that robe right now as we speak. In the Gospel Message, and in your baptism, you were given the invitation to join Jesus at the eternal banquet. And in the gift of faith that came with that Gospel invitation is the robe of righteousness that declares you to be what you can't be on your own, in right standing with the Father. You wear it right now. And no one can remove it from you. You can try to take it off. The devil and your own sinful heart tempt you to do so. But the Spirit of Christ, given in your baptism, is at work to make sure that robe stays on. To make sure that you remain right before God by faith in Christ alone, and not by any works or any good thing you might claim on your own. That's the promise you were sealed with in baptism, reminded of in the Absolution, and is confirmed in your body and soul in the Lord's Supper. Whenever Jesus returns, you are ready!

Conclusion

There are only two destinations in your eternal future, and you will arrive at one or the other. There is no 3rd choice of keeping the status queue of your life on earth now. One destination is the place of eternal destruction, the place of outer darkness that is eternal separation from God. It's the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. As a baptized child of God, you would have to make a conscious and concerted choice to wind up there. Jesus came to earth, died on the cross, and rose again to save you from this eternal place of torment. In baptism He welcomed you into His kingdom on this earth and gave you His righteousness that you wear like a white robe. He gave you His Spirit to make sure it stays on you. He has prepared the most awesome party ever on the Last Day. There has never been a feast like it before. In our foretaste of the feast to come in the Lord's Supper Christ is present through the means of bread and wine. But at this banquet on the Last Day He will be physically present with us in the flesh. On that day we will no longer be clothed with the robe of righteousness that hides our sin. That robe will be our permanent possession. It will be who we really are. There will be no sin left to hide. And as perfected sinless people we will enjoy the company of our Savior and each other forever. It's not a party you are going to want to miss. God doesn't need you to attend. But it is His heart's desire that you spend eternity with Him. It won't be a drag. It will be more awesome than you or I can imagine. You've been invited. You have a place. You have the wedding garment. Jesus is here right now to make sure all of that is true in your life as well as mine. Amen