

## "Ungrateful Guests"

Matthew 22:1-14

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Matthew 22:1-14

<sup>1</sup>Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet." <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet."  
<sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Prayer.

"The parables of Christ,  
even the innocent, pastoral, tender,  
innocuous-seeming ones,  
conceal just below the surface  
a whiplash,

a shock,  
a charge of dynamite.  
The stories set conventional expectations,  
... concerning God, religion, politics, vocation,  
status and class,  
utterly off kilter."<sup>1</sup>

Like Charlie's Golden Ticket<sup>2</sup>  
a royal invitation  
is not to be ignored.  
It is only sent to the elite  
the privileged  
the rich and wealthy;  
people such as the ones  
before whom  
Jesus stood and witnessed.

Ignore the invitation  
and accept the risks.  
Ignore the invitation and expect the wrath.  
Ignore the invitation ... and know that  
death follows disloyalty to the king;  
they go together like  
the rich and their  
servants, chauffeurs, and nannies.

The pious, priestly authorities of Israel  
the religious aristocrats  
whom Jesus taunted and teased  
don't give the invitation  
a second thought.  
The Sovereign's Son who stood before them  
is the Son who they rejected  
despised  
and nailed to a tree.

It takes a lot of gall and vinegar  
to ridicule the one who feeds you.  
Cold stabs the knife  
as they flaunt, taunt, and deride Him.  
It takes a lot of gall and vinegar  
to leave for dead  
the Son of the Father  
who created you.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Berrigan

<sup>2</sup> A reference to "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," by Roald Dahl

Is there any surprise  
when the king's anger  
rains death down  
upon the disloyal?  
40 years after Jesus  
and Jerusalem is  
trampled  
burned and  
razed.  
Is anyone surprised  
by the Royal's wrath,  
the Lord's judgment?

The King moves on  
and never looks back.  
There is a celebration to create!  
A party to plan!  
The Son is to be lifted up  
The Son is to be lifted up  
The Son is to be lifted up  
so who next  
should be invited to the party?

The list of elite is replaced  
with a list of the people  
from the other side of the tracks  
from the other side of town.  
The invitation is all encompassing  
all inclusive;  
a wide net caste into a small sea.  
Blue collar and white collar  
working girls and working guys  
tax collectors, beggars, and thieves  
tall sheep, short sheep, counted sheep and  
lost sheep  
to all the whos in Who-ville<sup>3</sup>  
goes the invitation!

An all you can eat grand buffet  
bought and paid for  
on the king's dime;  
filled to overflowing  
with platters upon platters  
of luscious fruits  
decadent sweets  
racks of roasts

<sup>3</sup> A reference to Dr. Seuss - How the Grinch Stole Christmas (1966)

fountains of chocolate  
never empty goblets  
of Bacchus' finest wine.  
A king's wedding reception  
for his son  
stretches the imagination  
to give us a taste  
- a sample -  
of the heavenly banquet  
our Father is preparing  
for when we are welcomed home.

Like the adolescent  
who doesn't recognize the need  
to dress for success,  
undoubtedly  
some ignorant fools  
will come for the banquet  
and never  
recognize or respect  
where the food came from  
or the occasion for the celebration.

"Who needs laws  
when all the food and drink are free?"  
they ask in their drunken stupor.  
"Etiquette? Who needs it?"  
the short sighted will say  
unable to look beyond  
the pile of food before them.  
"Send a thank you note?"  
Yeah, I'll get right on that, Jack.  
Get out of my way and pass me the turkey,  
gravy, and dressing."

Pity the short sighted  
and the ignorant.  
Pity the glutton  
and the self absorbed.  
Pity the arrogant and the rude.  
Pity the fool,  
the ungrateful guest.

Though every one of us  
are second tier invitees  
- regular men and women  
serfs, soldiers, and commoners  
of the King -

the same expectations  
are extended to us.  
Respect.  
Honor.  
Thanks.  
The same rewards  
are extended to us.  
Undeserved  
Unanticipated  
Unlimited Grace.

Heed the halyard  
that flies the flag  
of gale or hurricane:  
the king comes  
to welcome the guests.  
The king's attention  
is drawn  
to those who refuse to heed  
to those who flaunt and taunt  
the authority and respect  
worthy of Royalty.

Thank goodness  
the baptismal robe  
is tailored by a  
lifetime of discipleship.  
It will more than make due when the trumpet  
sounds.

Thank goodness  
faith knits the tapestry  
that satisfies the King.  
It will more than make due when the trumpet  
sounds.

Thank goodness  
the King's attention  
is drawn to the arrogant, the ignorant, and the  
entirely self-absorbed.

“Friend, how did you get in here  
without a wedding robe?”

Let's face it;  
no one likes to witness another's self-  
destruction.  
No one likes to see another's demise.  
But when the example is made  
when the standards are upheld  
when the integrity and health of the

community come  
before the selfish, destructive actions of an  
ungrateful guest  
Thy kingdom comes,  
Thy will is done,  
no one else will ever find the  
need or desire  
to go astray.

Accept the invitation.  
Dress for success.  
Give the Lord and King  
the respect  
and thanks  
He deserves.  
And together  
my friends  
we will feast at the King's  
Heavenly banquet.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come to me.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.