

## “Is It Enough to Be Called?”

Matthew 22:1-14

12 October 2008

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### Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 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.’ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ 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. “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. 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.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Prayer.

1. **“Many are called, but few are chosen.”** The Gospel for today comes from Matthew 22:1-14.
  - a. Setting.
    - i. Today’s lesson is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 3 successive narratives and parables that we have been following these past few weeks. For now, the parables are complete.
      1. Matthew 21:23-32: teaching in the Temple, parable of man with two sons, one agrees but does nothing, other says no, but complies.
      2. Matthew 21:33-46: Parable of the Vineyard and the Wicked Tenants.
      3. Matthew 22: 1-14: Parable of the King and the Wedding Banquet.
    - ii. A reminder: Jesus teaching in the outer courts of the temple. Chief Priests, Pharisees, and elders of the people were angry. He had cleared the moneychangers, pronouncing judgment against them.
    - iii. They wanted to arrest him.
    - iv. The crowds regarded him as a prophet, as their messiah, their political savior.

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- v. Following today's passage will be numerous accounts of the religious authorities attempting to trap Jesus; which, of course, results in opportunities for Jesus to teach.
  - b. Today's Parable. "The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to ..."
    - i. King had already sent out wedding invitations for his son's reception. The feast is prepared. No one comes.
    - ii. King sends out his slaves to those invited. No one comes.
    - iii. King sends out second group of slaves. Gives specific directions. The invited made light of it, mistreated the slaves, and killed them.
    - iv. King becomes enraged. Destroys those who had been invited and burned their city.
    - v. King sends slaves out to fill the halls. The good and the bad come. The festive reception takes place.
    - vi. King notices that one of the guests is not dressed for the occasion. "How did you get in here dressed like that?"
    - vii. King has him bound and thrown into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
    - viii. Pronouncement: "For many are called, but few are chosen."
  - c. King is likened to God.
  - d. The first group of people invited to the wedding reception are the people of Israel, invited by the covenant of Abraham.
  - e. The King's slaves are disciples of Jesus Christ.
  - f. The wedding banquet itself stands for the kingdom of God, the messianic banquet of all the saints gathered at the Lord's table.
  - g. The Gentiles of the world are those invited secondly; Greeks, Romans, non-Jews.
  - h. Jesus is looking at the religious authorities and telling them the feast is prepared, you've been invited, not one of you has shown up. Instead you mocked, beat, and killed my disciples.
  - i. Secondly, Jesus is telling them, beware! Even those who show up later for the messianic feast better be prepared to live according to the King. God will not tolerate disrespect.
  - j. Undoubtedly the religious authorities fumed at this; which, of course, made the crowds go wild.
2. **"Many are called, but few are chosen."** Fast forward 60 years to the first century church established by the apostle Matthew. Up until this point, the story had never been written down. It was the generation or two who followed in Matthew's tradition who first put the Gospel into the written word. It is a combination of two parables, probably fused together by this group of Matthew's people. We can learn more about the passage by looking into this early community of faith.
- a. The apostle Matthew had tension between his Jewish background and secular lifestyle: Tax collector. Disciple of Christ.
  - b. His community was made up of former Jews who had converted to Christian disciples.
  - c. The community Matthew established was a mixture of both Good and Bad. There were those who lived for the day; go ahead, sin and go wild- for God saves us

- anyways. And there were those who prepared for Christ's immediate return; they watched, they waited, they remained faithful to the reading of the word, the sharing of the sacraments, and the outreach to the poor.
- d. Just as the King's slaves were beaten and killed in the Parable, so too were members of Matthew's community, disciples of Jesus Christ. Members of the community were being imprisoned, beaten and killed on a daily basis.
  - e. The Gospel author doesn't realize that the church is permanent. Matthew expected Jesus to return at any time; he would return with fire and judgment, both dealing with their tormentors AND pruning the vine that did not bear fruit, and casting it into the fire.
  - f. Matthew makes a point by including this Parable in the Gospel: It is not enough to be called. God expects a faithful response to His call. God expects a response that is appropriate and befitting of God.
  - g. The time will come when bad will be exposed.
  - h. Judgment is the work of God.
  - i. Many are called, but "Chosen" means preserving to the end; being faithful; being ready.
3. **"Many are called, but few are chosen."** What does this Parable of the Wedding Banquet have to do with us here today? A few points:
- a. **This parable tells us that God casts a wide net.**
    - i. In fact, God is in the business of gathering people in, calling them into a life of faith.
    - ii. The net doesn't discriminate. Everyone is invited.
    - iii. In our experience, God is warming hearts for Christ. All kinds of people are called to come to know Christ as a personal Lord and Savior, and to attach themselves to a community of faith, a body of Christ.
    - iv. Some respond, but the vast majority of people do not.
    - v. Regardless, God repeats the call, casts the net again and again, for people to come to a place of surrender for Christ.
    - vi. Every one of us are so blessed that we have been personally called by God.
  - b. Jesus tells us that **just because you've been called, doesn't mean you have special rights or claims to the banquet**; to take a place at the table in God's kingdom.
    - i. Rights or claims to the Kingdom can only be granted by God, and God alone. We cannot grant salvation to others. We cannot even save ourselves.
    - ii. It is God who is in the business of saving, not you or me. It is not possible for any one of us to say, "I am saved," or "You are saved."
    - iii. Salvation has nothing to do with what we do, saying some wonderful prayer, or even turning our whole life over to Jesus.
    - iv. Salvation is what God does. It is God's prerogative. God grants salvation, purely as a means of grace.
    - v. We are disciples of Jesus feasting at God's banquet, only because God is gracious enough to have invited us.

- c. This parable tells us that **God longs to choose everyone who is called.**
    - i. Just as the King wanted everyone at the feast to be dressed appropriately, so too does God want us to respond faithfully and appropriately to the invitation.
    - ii. Being dressed in the proper attire means we work cooperatively together.
      - 1. It means we do everything we can do to build up the body.
      - 2. It requires us to be well grounded in the Word of God.
      - 3. It means maintaining a well exercised, disciplined, healthy life of faith.
      - 4. Regular worship keeps us refreshed with God, and dressed in the proper wedding robe.
    - iii. God wants everyone to respond to the call and to rejoice appropriately at his heavenly banquet.
  - d. The parable of the Wedding Banquet tells us that **we can expect there will be some who will respond to God's call, but they will behave badly.**
    - i. They will choose disruption, disrespect, and a life of selfish behavior.
    - ii. They will respond to God's call. But then they will abuse it by striving for ego, power, and will.
    - iii. They will show up to God's banquet looking like a jerk and behaving like a jerk.
    - iv. No matter how much we try, or wish differently, we can't force others to behave.
  - e. **Jesus tells us that God is the judge of our life.**
    - i. Judgment is passed corporately, or upon the whole group; such as the King destroying the murderers and burning their city.
    - ii. Judgment is made individually, upon the life of each individual; such as the King casting out the one who did not wear a wedding robe.
    - iii. Only God can judge us, our church, or ourselves. We are not up for evaluation by anyone other than God, almighty.
4. **"Many are called, but few are chosen."**
- a. We've been called. God wants us to attend and participate in God's Kingdom.
  - b. What makes a difference is how we respond to God's call.
  - c. Do we give our God every opportunity to chose us?
  - d. Will we show up dressed and acting inappropriately?
  - e. Or will we show up in our finest wedding robe?
  - f. When we stand before God, how will we be judged?

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