

DRESSED AND READY
Parable: The Wedding Feast
Sermon 8
Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:16-24

I. ILLUSTRATION

LAVISH STATE DINNER—Monday, 3 June 2019

- Queen Elizabeth II hosted American President Donald Trump
- Strict dress code—White-tie with cropped coat [black tie next night at US Ambassador’s]
- Buckingham Palace Ballroom—with string orchestra and 12 pipers
- 2 years of diplomacy before invitation was extended—6 months to plan
- 19 Serving stations—each with page, footman, under-butler, wine butler
- Table took 3 days to set—8000 pieces of cutlery and crockery
- 4 course dinner—menu in French—\$1000 bottles of Lafite Rosthilde 1990 wine
- 170 guests—around massive horseshoe-shaped table
- Guest list included
 - Prince Philip, Prince Charles and D. of Cornwall, Prince William and D. of Cambridge
 - Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Environment Secretary
 - US Ambassador, Treasury Secretary, NSA Advisor
- Declined invitation
 - Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn
 - Liberal Party leader Vince Cable
 - Speaker of House of Commons John Bercow

II. BIBLICAL TEXTS

1. MATTHEW 22:1-14

- a. After Triumphal Entry
- b. Religious leaders opposed Jesus
- c. **Third** in series of parables—challenging the religious leaders
 - **Two Sons**—one reluctantly obedient—the other does not keep his promise
 - **Wicked Tenants**—who reject and kill the Son of the Vineyard Owner

Mt 22:1-14—1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. 4 Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’ 5 But they paid no attention and

went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw 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."

2. LUKE 14:15-24

- a. **On the road** to Jerusalem—after these events
 1. Parables—how the kingdom grows
 - Mustard Seed (large) and Leaven (secretly)
 2. Responded to question—*Will just a few be saved?*—Lk 13:23
 - a. Some expecting admittance will be rejected
 - b. Kingdom will be expanded—far beyond boundaries of Israel
 - ☆ Many will come—from east and west
 - c. Great Reversal
 - ☆ Last will be first—and first will be last
 3. Lament over rejection by Jerusalem—Lk 13:34
 - Anticipated rejection of invitation to feast
- b. Eating in a Pharisee's home—[like Lk 15]
- c. **Third** in series of dinner passages
 - **Pompous and Humble Guests**—teaching humility
 - **Warning** against self-serving—invite poor to dinner—not those who can repay

Lk 14:15-24—15 *When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"* 16 *But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;* 17 *and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'* 18 *But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'* 19 *Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'* 20 *Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'* 21 *And the slave came back and reported this to his*

master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

III. COMPARISON AND MESSAGE OF TEXTS

A. BOTH—ARE KINGDOM PARABLES

- **Matthew**—Jesus explicitly stated it—**v1**
- **Luke**—Jesus responded to comment of dinner guest—**v15**

Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God

B. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARABLES

1. MATTHEW—**king** invites—LUKE—a 'man' invites
2. MATTHEW—**two efforts** to bring original invitees—LUKE—just one effort
3. MATTHEW—**rebellious** response by 'the rest'—LUKE—no rebellion
4. MATTHEW—**retribution** is severe—LUKE—no retribution—*but* no second chance
5. MATTHEW—**one open** invitation fills house—LUKE—requires second invitation
6. MATTHEW—**mixture** of 'evil and good'—LUKE—no description given
7. LUKE—**social focus** on outcasts—MATTHEW—no such focus
8. LUKE—**urgency** to 'bring in' and 'compel'—MATTHEW—'invite' them
9. MATTHEW—**judgment** severe on unprepared guest—LUKE—rejection of non-attenders

C. BASIC MESSAGE—COMMON TO BOTH PARABLES

1. THE KINGDOM IS READY—LIKE A PREPARED BANQUET
2. THE INVITATION IS NOW OPEN TO ALL
3. THE KING WANTS TO FILL HIS HOUSE FOR THE CELEBRATION
4. BUT SOME INVITEES WILL NOT BE IN ATTENDANCE

D. DIFFERENT EMPHASES IN EACH PARABLE

1. MATTHEW

- a. Invitation was **patiently re-extended** to original group—even after they rejected it
- b. **Not everyone** who accepted the invitation was allowed to dine

2. LUKE

- a. **Progressive growth**—servants kept searching—until his house was filled
- b. Guests included people not normally accepted—**social outcasts**

E. DOES **MT 22:11-14** BELONG HERE?

1. THIS IS A 'HARD SAYING'
 - Was it fair—to reject poor invitee from roadside—who could not change clothes?
 - Was it a separate parable—spoken elsewhere by Jesus—attached by Matthew later?
2. BUT IT BELONGS HERE
 - Jesus spoke it at some time—probably in connection with this parable
 - Regardless of circumstances—Matthew was inspired to put it here
3. HOW TO DEAL WITH IT
 - Do not expect parables to explain every circumstance and chronological detail
 - **Real issue**—what made him unacceptable?

IV. BACKGROUND

A. HISTORICAL—ANCIENT PALESTINIAN TRADITIONS

1. IMPORTANCE OF MEALS
 - a. **Central** event—confirming social relations
 - b. **Luke** mentions meals frequently—almost every chapter
 - c. Primary way of assigning **honor or shame**—by invitation or lack thereof
 - d. Not to extend invitation—was a discourtesy—or a rebuff
 - e. To refuse an invitation—was a deliberate insult
 - f. Royal banquet for a prince
 - King expected all leaders to attend—out of loyalty
 - Refusal was tantamount to insurrection
2. FEAST PROTOCOLS
 - a. Date was set—with invitations—without exact hour
 - b. When hour was set and dinner prepared—guests were summoned
 - c. Two classes attended
 - Lesser people arrived early—grateful for invitation
 - Greater people arrived at last minute—to make grand entrance
 - d. Outcasts—poor and infirmed
 - Never had a chance to eat at such a banquet

B. THEOLOGICAL—IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL

1. MESSIANIC BANQUET
 - a. Promise—**Is 25**—will be prepared by the Lord—when He comes to save His people
 - b. Exclusive expectation—only Jews who were pure and whole—would be invited

- **Lev 21**—not even priests with defects could ‘offer food for God’
2. JESUS OVERTURNED THEIR EXPECTATIONS
 - a. Ate with sinners and tax-collectors—**Mk 2**
 - b. Rejected food purity laws—what comes out of man is what defiles him—**Mk 7**
 - c. Warned earlier—the guest list was changing—**Mt 8; Lk 13**
 - Others—from the **east and west**—would attend the banquet
 - But ‘sons of the kingdom’—would be **cast into outer darkness**

V. EXPLANATION

A. MESSAGE—OF THE BASIC PARABLE—**Mt 22:1-10—Lk 14:16-24**

1. THE LORD HAS PREPARED HIS MESSIANIC BANQUET
 - The Kingdom of God—**is present**—already inaugurated
2. HIS SON—JESUS—IS THE BRIDEGROOM
3. THE SERVANTS—ARE THE LORD’S MESSENGERS
 - OT prophets—Jesus—Apostles
4. JEWS WERE INVITED FIRST—BUT REJECTED THE INVITATION
 - a. **Matthew**—nation **Israel** rejected twice
 - Prophets—including John the Baptist
 - Jesus and the Apostles
 - b. **Luke**—legalistic religious leaders rejected Jesus—a friend of ‘outcasts’
5. INVITATION EXTENDED TO OTHERS
 - a. **Matthew**—after **two attempts** to reach Jews—to the Gentiles
 - b. **Luke**
 - **First**—to **outcasts** of Israel—sinners rejected by religious leaders
 - **Second**—to **Gentiles**
6. SOME WILL NOT ENTER GOD’S KINGDOM
 - Because they reject the invitation—their own fault!

B. KEY POINTS—IN BASIC PARABLE

1. THE KINGDOM IS PREPARED
 - Jesus fulfilled the OT
 - He established the New Covenant
 - He completed this work on the cross—***It is finished***
2. GOD’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION IS REVEALED

- a. Before foundation of the earth—God knew what would happen
 - He would invite the Jews first—calling them as priests to reach all people
 - They would reject His Son— forfeiting their call as a holy nation of priests
 - He would extend His invitation to Gentiles—and build His church
 - b. God’s ultimate plan all along—nothing takes God by surprise
3. THE INVITATION IS OPEN TO EVERYONE
- o Mt 22:9—*as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast*
 - o Lk 14:23—*Go out to the highways and by-ways, and compel them to come in*
4. NO EXCUSE SHOULD STAND BETWEEN US AND HIS INVITATION
- a. All reasons seem **reasonable**—but they were just excuses
 - Feeble and self-serving—not obeying the king—God
 - b. First man—**business** first—his piece of land
 - The secular crowded out the sacred
 - Worldly gain came first—**like thorny ground**—**Parable of Sower**
 - c. Second man—**novelty** first—trying out his *new* oxen
 - Like **Athenians**—always wanting to hear something new—**Acts 17**
 - Like **itching ears**—turning away from the truth—to fables—**II Tim 4**
 - Like **shallow and rocky ground**—**Parable of Sower**
 - **Expulsive power of a new affection**—in reverse
 - d. Third man—**domestic** duty first—newlywed
 - Home is important!
 - But it can become a fortress of selfishness—shutting out God
 - Homes should be devoted to God—to serve God and bless others
 - **Irony**: king opens His royal home—to one who thinks his home is better
5. INGRATITUDE BRINGS ON DIVINE JUDGEMENT
- a. The **stinging insult**!
 1. Invitees had agreed to come—by their pledge of loyalty—but reneged
 2. They were disloyal—and **shamed** the king
 3. They wanted the benefits of His bounty
 - Only when it was convenient
 - Only on their own terms—when it served their personal interests
 - b. God is **offended**—by ingratitude and presumption
 1. **Isaiah 65**—gives similar picture
 - a. God’s people—Israel—were obstinate and rebellious

b. So he revealed Himself to *others*—Gentiles—who had not sought Him

Is 65:1—*I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, “Here am I, here am I,” to a nation which did not call on My name.*

2. Consider the **Ten Lepers**—healed by Jesus

➤ None showed gratitude—but the **Samaritan**—**Lk 17:16!**

c. God’s rejection—will be real

1. **Exclusion** oath—is a certain reality

Lk 14:24—*none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.*

2. Just as God did not allow Exodus generation to enter Canaan—**Nu 14:30**

6. THE PRESENT KINGDOM IS A MIXTURE OF EVIL AND GOOD

- o The church attracts both the sincere and insincere
- o The **redeemed**—and—the **lost**—unaware of their lostness
- o **Wheat and tares**—**Mt 13**
- o **Good and bad fish**—**Mt 13**

Jude 4—*For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

C. MESSAGE—OF FOLLOW-ON PASSAGE—**Mt 22:11-14**

1. MANY ARE CALLED [INVITED]—BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

a. Both the **evil** and the **good** are present—in present kingdom

b. But not everyone will be saved

- Responding to the **question**—*are there just a few who are being saved*—**Lk 13:23**
- Jesus **answered**—false disciples will be cast out—**Lk 13:24-28**

2. ONLY THOSE PROPERLY DRESSED WILL BE ADMITTED

- o Properly clothed = **robe of righteousness**—cleansed of all sin
- o The ‘good’ are properly clothed—justified by Christ
- o The ‘evil’ are improperly clothed—still in their sin
- o Then—just being a **Jew** was **not enough**
- o Today—just being **in church** is **not enough**

3. EXPLANATION—HOW TO BE CLOTHED PROPERLY

- a. **Not explained** in this passage
- b. But already **prophesied**—so they understood clearly

Is 61:10—*I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

c. Fulfilled in New Covenant—by Christ

II Cor 5:21—*God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Gal 3:27—*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

4. UNRIGHTEOUS ATTITUDES—OF THE IMPROPERLY CLOTHED MAN

- a. No sense of **awe**
 - Being invited into the majestic court of the king
- b. No sense of the weighty **occasion**
 - He came just for a meal—not celebration of royal marriage
- c. No sense of reverence—**holy fear**
 - Inappropriate attire showed disrespect and contempt for the king

5. WORD OF WARNING FOR GENTILES

- Do not think all admission standards are abolished
- **Righteous** behavior—required in the OT—is **still required**
- No place for immoral antinomianism—relying on cheap ‘grace’

Rom 6:1—*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*

VI. APPLICATION

1. CELEBRATE—THE KINGDOM IS HERE!

- Jesus equated Kingdom of Heaven with **joy and festivity**
- Jesus **enjoyed** life—ate and drank—even with sinners
- Christians should remember this—not live somber, humorless lives

2. BE GRATEFUL—GOD MERCIFULLY SAVES—EVEN US!

- **The outcasts**—never dreamed they would be invited to a great feast!
- Like them—we are all unworthy without Christ—Who saves us!
- Come before the Lord with thanksgiving and praise!

3. REJECT EXCUSES—THAT KEEP US FROM FOLLOWING CHRIST

- Their reasons seemed good and logical

- o Tempting things are not always bad—or we would seldom fall
- o Most distractions look ‘good’—even necessary
- o Don’t let the ‘good’ interfere with having the ‘best’

4. PREPARE—TO COME INTO THE LORD’S PRESENCE

- a. It is a **privilege** to worship and serve Him
 - Attendance should not be grudging or legalistic—but out of love and devotion
- b. **Anticipate** with excitement—**meeting the Lord** in worship
- c. Give Him our very best
 1. With **enthusiasm**
 - Why do some **respect the flag** and get **emotional at the national anthem**
 - But have lackadaisical attitude about hymns and worship
 2. Even with our **attire**—decent and respectful—make a special effort!

5. SHARE THE GOSPEL—WITH ENTHUSIASM

- a. Remember the **devastating consequences** of sin
 - **Hell is real**—and the threat is imminent
 - **Judgment** is necessary—for God is just
 - Without punishment for sin—the grace of forgiveness loses its meaning
 - Don’t try to make God look ‘good’—when it really makes Him look unjust!
- b. **Time is running out** for those who reject the gospel
- c. We must **compel** them to come in
 - This *does not mean*—forcing people into the kingdom
 - But—impressing upon them with greatest **urgency**

Remember—He says—“*Here am I, here am I,*” to a nation which does not call on His name.

VII. INVITATION

HERE I AM, LORD

Verse 3

**I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?**

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.**

Verse 1

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Verse 2

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?