

Intro

Invitations. Some we like. Some we avoid like the plague.

Wedding. Invite to a catered suite at a Celtics game. Newfoundland moose hunt. Bridal shower. Girls' weekend.

Birthday parties for me. Other things I'd rather do. There's some things you wouldn't want to be invited to. Other things you'd rather do.

This morning Jesus speaks of God's invitation. Good news likened to an invite to a wedding feast. Many disregarded. Some responded with hostility. Some came incorrectly. Others were welcomed in.

How have you responded to God's invitation to eternal life? Believers, are you discouraged when the good news is rejected? Let's turn to Matthew to ponder these matters.

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Passage Focus

We'll take some time to understand the parable's meaning. Then we'll consider four applications of the passage. Accurate understanding first, then application.

Parable addressees

Them (22:1) = chief priests, elders, Pharisees. The Sanhedrin. The supreme religious, political, and legal counsel in Jerusalem.

Jesus has just made some pretty inflammatory claims:

- 1) Tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before them (21:31).
- 2) They were the despicable tenants that repeatedly rejected God's prophets (21:33-41).
- 3) The kingdom would be taken from them and given to a people who would bear fruit (21:43) = they weren't fruitful.

Jesus drives the wedge a little deeper with this parable.

Invitation

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come." – 22:2-3

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king's invitation to a wedding feast for his son that is rejected.

- 1) The king holds a place of authority. To reject the invitation is a show of disrespect. So there's a sense of obligation.

▪ When Gerald invites me to an event at Living Waters I get the sense that he really wants me to go and he'll be disappointed if I don't go. Gerald doesn't invite as a disinterested party with no concern as to whether or not I'll attend. The king expects the invite to be embraced.

2) To be invited is an honor (not just anyone is invited).

▪ The king doesn't invite everyone. The king doesn't invite commoners. He invites his closest friends and colleagues. An invite only event.

3) "*they would not come*" = literally "they were not willing to come."

The verb tense indicates a continuous state of unwillingness. Settled rejection.

Persistent invite

The king insists and aims to entice:

'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' – 22:4

The wedding feast should be enticing, appealing. Oxen and fat calves = a lavish feast. Kind of like a wedding with extravagant hoerderves (cheese, crackers, shrimp wrapped in bacon, chicken wings, meatballs), salads, prime rib, and desert (cakes, puddings, pies, ice cream, fudge). Who in their right mind would turn that down?

Persistent rejection

But the offer continues to fall on deaf ears.

- 1) Some paid no attention and went about their normal lives, whether farming or business interests.
- 2) Some abused and killed the king's servants who gave the invitations.

The invite revealed disinterest and opposition.

The king responds

1) The kings' troops are sent to execute the murderers and burn their city.

▪ Any king would be livid with this response to his gracious offer!

- 2) Those first invited to the wedding feast are judged unworthy.
- 3) The king invites a different group of people to the wedding feast.
- 4) "*as many as you can find*" = anyone willing to come.

Those not previously invited replace those initially invited. As the story goes, dignitaries are replaced with commoners, some being reputable people, others not so much. Think a royal ball composed of some hard-working, moral people, drug dealers, town drunks, and the poor, not the wealthy and upper class. Something's out of place.

5) "*the wedding hall was filled with guests*"

▪ The response was positive. A multitude received the offer.

An excluded guest

- 1) “*no wedding garment*” = either a garment provided by the king or a garment expected to be worn at such occasions.
- This individual came ill-prepared for the feast. Think a military ball where someone shows up in overalls.
- 2) “speechless” = nothing could be said in his defense and shock.
 - 3) Cast into outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- Barred from entry and sent to a place of punishment and suffering.
- Some invited refuse. Some replacements accept. Some come unprepared.

Characters in the parable

- 1) The king = God
- 2) Wedding feast = new heavens and new earth/marriage supper of the lamb (Rev 19:9)
- 3) Those initially invited = the Jewish people
- 4) Those who paid no attention = Jewish citizens in general
- 5) Those who killed his servants = Jewish religious and political leaders
- 6) Servants = the prophets
- 7) Those invited afterwards = the Gentiles

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. – Matthew 21:43

- 8) The man without a wedding garment = those excluded from the new heavens and new earth because they haven’t responded to the gospel correctly

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ – Matthew 7:21-23

- Some will think they’re in when they’re actually out!

- 9) Outer darkness = hell

- A place of sorrow, anguish, and fright that last forever and ever. A place to be avoided at all costs. A place that proves God cares when humans inflict other humans. A place that proves God cares when people sin against you. Contrary to popular opinion, hell = an apologetic for God’s goodness.

- 10) Many called = many are invited with the gospel message
- 11) Few chosen = few respond to the gospel message in a manner acceptable to God

Jesus doesn’t use the terms called and chosen in the same way Paul does. When Jesus uses these terms he isn’t talking about predestination. Paul uses these terms when discussing predestination.

Parable purpose

- 1) To indict Jerusalem’s leaders for their rejection
- 2) To explain the gospel going to the Gentiles

3) To warn us about approaching the marriage supper of the lamb incorrectly

The kingdom of heaven speaks of God's saving rule. God's saving rule advances by invite from the king. Many refuse. Many come.

Application 1: The gospel should be enticing

Like the king's invite should have enticed those invited, the gospel should be enticing to us. Christians throw around the term gospel. What does it mean?

Gospel = good news

"the message that Christ died for sins and rose from the dead with the intent for the hearer to come to faith in Christ" – Harry Fletcher

- Harry highlighted Jesus' death for our sins and his resurrection from the dead.

"The good news of Christ for the salvation of sinful people." – Gregg Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 94

- Gregg highlights salvation accomplished: incarnation (God the Son took on human flesh), sinless life, crucifixion, resurrection.
- Gregg highlights the response to this good news is faith and repentance.

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. – Matt 4:23

- good news that the kingdom had dawned with Jesus' arrival...good news of an eternal kingdom

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." – Mark 1:14-15

- something proclaimed...something to believe...something that calls for repentance

"A message of good news about Jesus' death for sinners and his resurrection from the dead that calls for a response of faith and repentance." – My definition

The gospel is good news past, present, and future.

Past

Sins forgiven. No more worrying if our good outweighs our bad. No more fear of God's punishment. Instead peace with God. Life lived in loving response to our Savior who died in our place. Full confidence God accepts me despite myself.

Present

No longer slaves to sin. Newness of life through the indwelling Spirit. Before faith we were spiritually dead. Slaves to sin. Unable to keep God's law. With the Spirit we can put sin to death. We can overcome specific sins, become people of wisdom. Our desires can be altered. Theologians call this sanctification. The process of becoming more like Jesus in our character. A process that continues till we die.

Future

When the eternal kingdom comes. The hope of the new heavens and new earth where death and sin will cease. Where sorrow and suffering will be a thing of the past. The opposite of hell. No more physical decline. No more being sinned against. No more suffering the consequences of our sins. The wedding feast pictures this aspect of the gospel.

This is good news!

Application 2: The gospel is rejected in a variety of ways

In our parable, we see the gospel rejected out of indifference. Some find the good news unappealing. No interest. Some find the good news to be dangerous or threatening. Some killed the king's messengers.

Sometimes the gospel is treated with indifference. We think we're sharing something glorious. Others find our good news unappealing, irrelevant. An invite to a wedding feast (shrimp, prime rib, cheesecake) is treated like **an invite to a cheap buffet**.

They haven't experienced God like we have. Keep thinking you're sharing something glorious! Keep telling yourself the good news is like a wedding feast. This is a fight for faith! We have to remind ourselves we're sharing good news.

Sometimes the gospel is treated with hostility. We think we're sharing wonderful words of life. We're resisted like we're heralds of death. Jesus stood in the way of the Sanhedrin's power. The good news might stand in the way of pride or sinful pleasures or lies embraced. The good news might feel like a threat.

Why is this news truly good?

Let's think **past, present, future** once again. When I think past I think of no more shame for what's past. The good news is God forgives and lets us move on. When I think present I think about how God gives wisdom and empowering grace (heart change, strength and resolve, etc.). God changes my desires and helps me not repeat mistakes of the past. When I think future I think of a wedding feast. A time of celebration. A time when death and sin and sorrow and suffering will be no more.

The wedding feast should have appealed to those invited. The gospel should appeal to those we invite. Believers, remind yourselves of this!

Application 3: Every type of person is invited by the gospel

Male and female. Young and old. Black and white. Asian, Indian, etc. Blue collar. White collar. Educated. Uneducated.

Both good and bad (21:10). Outwardly moral people. Bad people. Thieves. Prostitutes. Drunks.

The good news is that you can be forgiven, God will receive you, no matter what you've done, no matter how long you've done it. Because Jesus' death is worthy to satisfy God's anger towards our sins. God is good so he must oppose evil. Our evil.

Jesus died to rescue us from the punishment our sins deserve. This is called substitutionary atonement. If we personally trust in Jesus, Jesus stands as our substitute. Jesus offers you forgiveness on the basis of his death on the cross. If you place your trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross (his one-time sacrifice), not yourself (my works...my good outweighs by bad...I'm a good person...I give to charity), God will forgive you on the

basis of what Jesus accomplished. On the cross God treated Jesus like he was a sinner, like he was us. If we put our trust in Jesus, God treats us like we're perfectly righteous, like we're Jesus.

Jesus was a sinless sacrifice, God the Son in human flesh, worthy to take the punishment we deserve.

Whether failure as a parent, being imprisoned, stealing, hurtful words, cruelty to others, substance abuse, blasphemy, indifference to God for decades, hating God for decades, mocking God for decades, God is willing to forgive you today.

Application 4: Be certain God will welcome you into his kingdom

Someone came unprepared. And they were turned away. How can we be sure we'll be welcomed into the eternal kingdom of heaven?

Ways we might come unprepared. Trusting we'll be accepted because we're not as bad as other people. Trusting in our good deeds. Like thinking donating money to a homeless shelter excuses your hatred for another person. Trusting in our parents' religion. Trusting in our baptism. Trusting in our church attendance. Presuming God is indifferent to sin. Presuming God forgives everyone.

How can we be certain? Through faith. Faith means trust. Like trust that **my brakes** are going to work. When I press my brakes I have full confidence my car is going to stop. If I didn't have full confidence in my brakes, I wouldn't drive my car. I trust my brakes.

That's how God wants us to relate to him. God makes promises so that we'll trust with certainty.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. – John 5:24

Those who trust Jesus' words are no longer subject to God's punishment and the wedding feast awaits. If we presently trust Jesus' finished work on the cross, not ourselves, we can have full confidence we'll be welcomed in. If we're trusting in God's promises we're trusting they're true for us.

Another basis for confidence is spiritual transformation. I've noted how the good news has a present aspect. God is changing our hearts through his Spirit. When we experience heart change we're experiencing God's promises.

Conclusion

If you're not certain, take hold of God's promises today.

- 1) Confess your sins to God.
- 2) Acknowledge your need for forgiveness.
- 3) Thank Jesus for dying for your sins and raising from the dead so you could be born again.
- 4) Please forgive me and change me and help me to follow you.