

Matthew 22:1-14 | Kent Stiles

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Preacher: Kent Stiles

[0:00] Morning. I echo what Kevin said. There was a nice showing yesterday at camp.!

It was good to see many hands. I think those that are in the tournament pool that are in here, raise your hand if your champion is out of the bracket.

Real high. Raise your hand real high. Oh, okay. We've made it almost to the Sweet 16. I think Kevin went on a limb, like the limbs at camp yesterday.

They weren't too sturdy. Now, I will say there is someone here who just has a knack for, I think, I could be wrong. Where is Lila up here? Lila, did you, where did you finish last year?

Last. Were you last? Okay. So this year she thought, you know what, I'd rather do it the other way around. And so right now, I think out of like, what is it, out of 40?

[1:19] Lila's only got like three or four games wrong. So she must be working with her dad. He must be the one giving her the advice. So, it's been fun. So, turn with me if you would in your Bibles to the book of Matthew.

We're going to thumb down to chapter 22. And we're going to continue our study in, excuse me, we're going to be continuing what I think I would term as the, we're going to look at a parable.

And as we have been doing quite a bit lately, and I think this parable could be termed as the third in a trilogy of judgment parables in response to the Jewish leaders and the Jewish leaders specifically who challenged Christ's authority.

And it's among the most dramatic and powerful of all the parables. And though it was directly, I think specifically directed at the unbelieving Israel and our leaders, like most things in scripture, it has far reaching significance for ensuing times, including your own.

So I think there's things that we have that we can glean from it. It's a challenging parable. Some people will have different thoughts on what it means. I'm going to share what I believe the context to be in regard to the wedding feast.

[2:42] And, but it grows out of the controversy, the Lord's controversy with the Pharisees during his last week of his ministry. And what we see is the enmity against him had sharpened tremendously throughout the city and the Pharisees and the scribes and the rulers.

We know that they were plotting at this point to kill him. And so knowing this, Jesus informed them very clearly about what was going to happen. So there was no surprise as to what was going to take place.

And part of that information was given in the form of this parable, which incidentally is built upon what he had said to them earlier in Matthew chapter 21. We saw last week in verse 43, where he says, Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.

And so I think this morning here is a key facets to understand in the meaning of this parable. And that is the king is God. So we're going to see a king.

We're going to see his son. That'd be Jesus Christ. We're going to see servants who are going to go out and give invitations. That would be the prophets. We're going to see the people who refuse the invitation, I think, to the banquet.

[3:52] And I would say that's the nation of Israel. And then we're going to see the people who accept the invitation, who are the Gentiles or the nations, all the nations of the earth. And so at the end of the passage, we'll see one concluding verse.

And we'll look at that briefly once the parable is over at the end of the message. So before we get started, let's go ahead and open up in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you, Lord, for your goodness.

We thank you for your mercies, Lord, which are new every morning. And Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to come together to look at your word, Lord. We thank you for just your salvation.

We thank you for the salvation offered in your son's death on the cross, Lord. We may we never take that for granted. We may never forget that, Lord. And just as we look at this parable today, Lord, of the wedding feast, we look at the righteousness that's available in your son.

We just pray, Lord, that we would be reminded of what was given for us, Lord, and just what comes through him. And we thank you for this in your name. Amen. So as we look at the parable this morning, we're going to break it up into four parts or four scenes, so to speak.

[5:03] So we'll go ahead and just jump right in. And the first thing we're going to look at here in verses one through six is we're going to see the invitation of the wedding feast.

And we're going to see specifically that that invitation is going to be rejected. So we'll jump right in verse. Verse we're going to be looking at twenty two, one down to 14. So let's look at verse one. It says, Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, verse two, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who had prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

So the phrase here, kingdom of heaven, it meant for the Jew, the kingdom of God, and it represented the realm of God's sovereign rule. And when Jesus used the term, he expanded it to mean this ongoing sphere of God's rule by grace, which included this divine program of gracious salvation.

And in this parable, the kingdom of heaven represents the spiritual community of God's redeemed people and those who are under his reign because they have personally placed their faith and their trust in his son as their savior.

And notice the first at first at this occasion, it's likened to a wedding feast. We might consider the wedding feast in today's terms to be a wedding reception.

[6:23] What I think we would typically refer to it as. But if you think about a wedding reception, I've been to a lot of weddings, as I'm sure most of you have. And a wedding reception typically is an occasion that's marked by gladness, by music, by laughter.

And in Jesus' day, a wedding feast was inseparable from the wedding itself in which it involved a week long series of meals and festivities. And it was the highlight of all social life.

So it was a good time. And you take it up a notch and for a royal wedding such as the one in this parable, that celebration could last for several weeks and it would be held in the palace and all the guests would stay for the entire time.

Enjoying lavish or unlimited food and drink in the festivities that were fit here for the son of the king. And so it was the ultimate celebration in the land.

If you want to think about it in layman's terms and Disney terms, think about with Cinderella when the invitation goes out. Nobody would dare not go.

[7:31] It was a big time. And that's what the wedding feast would be like. And I think it's important for us to understand that this is the way that the Lord characterized God's invitation to come into a relationship with him to be a follower of Christ.

That is not an invitation to a funeral. You know, many people would say that if you place your trust in Christ, if you decide to follow him, that you're giving up everything, that you are essentially, you're like a dead person.

You're not anything like what you were before. Well, that's true. We are a new creation. We're a new creature. But it's not like a funeral. It's an invitation to joy. It's not an invitation to a formal state dinner, but to a relaxed, cheerful, joyful occasion, something that you would want to be at, something that you would be enjoying.

It's an invitation to the greatest festival imaginable, given by the most lavish, greatest monarch imaginable for the most honored guest you can imagine.

So who wouldn't want to come? That's what we're looking at here. And so in verse three, it says, he sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

[8:53] So the custom in Jesus day was to invite people to the wedding for a long time before it actually occurred. This might be akin to when I got married.

I know it's, I say it's a newer thing. As I get older, newer is like 20, 30 years. I don't ever remember when I was younger getting save the date cards, right? But now it's almost as important as the invitation.

They'll save the date. And that's kind of how it is. It's like the invitations, they went out well before it actually occurred. And the invitations went out and they were acknowledged and they were accepted. And then when the preparations were complete, servants were then sent out to those who had already accepted the invitation to come.

And so to be pre invited to the king's son's wedding, that was the greatest honor possible. And I can imagine those who had been invited, they were quickly one, one to prone to boast, so to speak, of their honor to their friends and to their neighbors.

And so the invited guests in this parable are the Israelites. And they had been invited to the wedding long, long before through the prophets whom God had sent to them.

[10:01] And the invitation was to come and to have fellowship with the Messiah, the son. But now, centuries later, all things are ready and the son is there in their midst. And he himself is extending the final call. And he says, come now, everything's ready.

Come and enter into fellowship. And it's therefore beyond belief that when the actual call came to attend, what was their response? They were unwilling to come, it says.

And can you imagine seeing that response? What a shock. The God of the universe, this offer. Well, those listening to the parable, they were probably thinking to themselves, who would do such an unbelievable thing as to refuse the invitation to the wedding of the king's son?

You know, I would think that might be akin to, and it's even slightly different now with the political unrest that we live in now. But, you know, you can fast or rewind back to a day when there was civility in the country.

You know, imagine if the president said, hey, I want you to come and I'm going to give you a Presidential Medal of Freedom or Medal of Honor. You know, that would not be turned down by somebody because it's seen as a great honor and someone of great importance inviting you.

[11:16] So attending these weddings, it would have been even greater experience than attending or receiving the invitation to the royal wedding.

But on the other hand, to refuse an invitation from one's king, it would have been to dishonor him, which was a serious offense. But even stranger than this refusal of the invitation was the response of the king to their rejection.

So they reject the call, they reject the invitation. You know, and very few monarchs were known for humility and graciousness. That's not how kings would typically respond, especially in the face of such open insult as to refuse, the flagrant refusal to come.

But this king was no ordinary king. And so in verse four, it says this. It says, then he sent some more servants and he said, tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner.

So he wants them essentially to almost know, hey, this is what's in store for you. My oxen and the fatted cattle have been butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.

[12:23] So this kindly king, he renews his summons. And with more urgency, again, he offers a glimpse of the food that's going to be served at this lavish event.

And he finishes with a very personal hearty invitation. He says, come to the wedding banquet or come to the wedding feast. Well, in verse five, we see the response.

Again, it says, but they paid no attention and they went off one to his field, another to his business. So we see many here who were invited and they were coldly indifferent.

They were refusing the invitation of the king to come to an event of monumental significance. But rather they, it says they returned to their everyday employment, business as usual.

You know, attendance at weddings, it was a social obligation in Judaism. And so for the people in the parable to refuse the king's invitation, that was a grievous insult of major proportions.

[13:37] And such action, it would have warranted severe punishment for all the invited guests refused to come. That would really, that would greatly shame the king, as one would imagine.

You throw this party and nobody shows. You know, what a response. So we see the invitation was given in scene one and it was rejected.

Well, in scene two, we're going to see our part two, we're going to see how that rejection is handled. And we're going to see that that rejection of the invitation ultimately is punished in verse seven and eight.

Look at verse seven. It says the king was enraged. So he wasn't, you know, when we, when we gave out invitations, when Nicole and I were doing our wedding, she was still in school.

I was done early. So I was doing a lot of the prep work. She was really, really easy in that regard. But we had this list. And if you guys have ever think about what, one of the most difficult things about a wedding is to come up with a list, right?

[14:42] Because everybody that comes pay, you're going to pay for, you want people to be there, but it's a balance, right? So we kind of had these categories of like, you know, category one, two, and three, kind of like, we're going to send these invitations out.

If they respond, don't come, then we'll jump to category two. If they don't respond, we'll go to category three. So I won't tell each of you which category you were in. But no, it was, but it's, it's, you send these invitations out.

Now imagine if your, if your son was, was getting married or your daughter and you sent out wedding invitations and, you know, a week later, not a response. Two weeks later, not a response. Two weeks later, not a response. Three weeks later, not, or, or just, they're not going to come. I mean, how, how's that feel? Now here we have this king who's throwing this for his son. And that's what's going on here.

And it says in verse seven, he was enraged. And he sent his army and he destroyed, or back up, he destroyed those murderers and he burned the city.

[15:41] Excuse me. Let me, I'm out of order here. Sometimes I get my stuff and I put page numbers on here so I don't get out of order, but apparently.

Let's go back a bit. Let's jump in. Again, this, this, I'll come back to that verse. This refusal would have almost been an orchestrated effort.

So think about that, getting those cards back or not getting them back. And you're like, what's going on here? And someone is almost essentially sabotaging the event. Like, Hey, we'll show him, we'll show him by not responding.

So again, it was this traumatic breach of social order. And so Jesus, the listeners, they would be in, in sense that this, at this contemptible behavior of these people in the parable, they wouldn't make sense to them.

Why would they not come to this event? Why were they saying no? And so this was an invitation to enjoy these people. They wanted more than anything else. It's what they desired, what they made, what they were made for.

[16:40] And they were looking for in life, joy and gladness and fellowship and companionship. And it's abundant. And these people are saying no. And so when the day, when the day to day existence of eating and working and sleeping took priority, I mentioned in that verse, it says they went back to their everyday life.

They just did what they typically do. When that took priority over the invitation by the king, it indicated a loss of perspective, that they were more concerned about their best interest than the honor of the king.

And so they said no. But it went beyond that. And this is the verse, verse six. It says that the rest seized his servants. They mistreated them and they killed them.

So some who received the second gracious invitation of the king. Remember, he went out once. He went out a second time. Some who received the second invitation of this offense of being invited, they were guilty of a capital crime.

An act of flagrant rebellion. They acted extremely in a harsh manner. Now, it's one thing to say, you know what? Thanks for inviting me, but no thanks.

[17:52] Okay, you get a second card. Hey, I told you no once. Why do you bother me? I mean, you know, you get a cold call, spammer. You can get a little bit frustrated. Do you get to the point where you would kill the messenger?

Well, that's what we see here. That's not a normal response. And so imagine again, as the king finds out, I invited you once. Well, did they not get the letter?

I invited them twice. Not only did they say no, but they killed the messengers that were sent. And again, then now back to verse seven. What was the king's response?

Well, as you might imagine, he was enraged, it said. And he sent his army and he destroyed those murders and he burned their city. And so the patience and the understanding of the king, he had been down here, but now it was at its limits.

And that he would have been justified in punishing the offenders when they first refused invitation. But after repeated calls and the repeated wicked responses, this king was enraged.

[18:57] A very strong word used here. It didn't say he was slightly disappointed. It doesn't say that he was somewhat upset. It says that he was enraged. And it's not unlike God's response to the wickedness in the day of no, when he said, my spirit will not strive with men forever.

So troops were dispatched to take care of these rebels and the properties. And the parables hearers would naturally have applauded the king's rage as justified. They would have said, show them.

They can't treat you that way. Except those who were aware that the parable was describing them. That this destruction actually occurred, if we look in history at AD 70, when Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans by Titus.

And over, I think it was estimated at 1.1 million Jews were killed and their mutilated bodies were thrown over the walls of the city. I mean, that time came.

And in the parable, the king gives a word of explanation to his servants regarding all of those that had been invited but refused to come. And that's in verse eight. It says, then he said to his servants, the wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.

[20:18] So they were declared unworthy because they refused to accept an invitation that was not based on their individual worth in any sense of the word. As we'll see here in a few minutes, that which makes a person worthy of receiving God's invitation is not any sort of personal goodness or merit or something they've done on their own, but simply saying yes to God's invitation to receiving his son, Jesus Christ.

And again, we'll see that it's not based upon anything they've done. It's not based on how good they are. It's not based on their merit, where their ancestral line is, where they live. It's based upon simply saying yes.

So the invitation goes out and it was rejected. That rejection is punished. And thirdly, we're going to see then that the king pivots and new guests are invited and they accept in verse nine and 10.

So having dealt with the rebellious actions of the citizens, the king then turns his attention back to this empty banquet hall and his son's impending wedding celebration.

And he turns to his servants and he says this in verse nine. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.

[21:43] So this time the invitation goes out again. But the invitation goes out literally to the partings of the highways to the place where cross the crowded ways of life where people mingle and mix without distraction, where there are all kinds, the respectable and the disrespectful, the up and outers, the down and outers.

This invitation, it goes out to anyone who will hear anyone who wants may attend this lavish banquet of the king. It wasn't exclusive for one individual or one group.

It wasn't targeted to this city, but not that city. It wasn't for those of a certain income level or of a certain social status. It was for everyone. And this is clearly the Lord's prediction that the gospel message with its invitation to be in fellowship with the son is to go out to the entire world.

And we know history has confirmed that this pattern of what was predicted would happen or would follow exactly. The gospel has gone out to the entire world and it has been that whosoever will may come.

And through many centuries, many have come out of the highways and the byways of life, out of St. Louis, out of Webster Groves, out of Bethel.

[23:16] The Old Testament prophet Hosea, he had foretold this invitation to the Gentiles when he said, I will call those who were not my people, my people.

So because of Israel's refusal, the invitation, I shouldn't say because, after Israel's refusal of the invitation, then went out to the Gentiles.

And again, that includes us. And look at verse 10. It says, so the servants went out to the streets and they gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good.

And the wedding hall was filled with guests. So those that had not previously been invited, they came right away without hesitation.

And soon all the seats were filled. So in essence, it was standing room only. The banquet hall was filled with the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the wealthy and the poor.

[24:19] But this was the makeup of those folks who were invited as well. No one was ever invited to the wedding feast and was worthy to come.

All were equally unworthy, whether Jew or Gentile. And God has always extended his call for salvation to both the good and the bad.

And when I say good, we know scripture says there are none who are good. No, not one. So I reference that in terms of those who we would see as being in both sides of society.

Neither rich or righteous enough. And both are equally in need of God's grace and mercy. So we see these new guests.

They're invited and they accept. And then finally, the fourth we see. And this is a bit of a turn in the story is we see an intruder. And we see that he's expelled in verses 11 through 14.

[25:17] It was customary that after the food was served, kind of like at a wedding, the bride or the groom, they may come around and they may greet you. And this was the high point of the occasion and the opportunity to have a personal audience with the king and his son.

In verse 11, it says this, but when the king came to see his guests, he noticed a man there was not wearing wedding clothes. So this man, he wasn't a gate crasher.

He had been invited to the banquet, right? Everybody had an invitation. However, he didn't have on suitable garments for the occasion. He wasn't wearing his wedding clothes.

He must have stood out in this packed hall being the only one there without the proper garment.

And the fact that all the other guests were properly attired, though gathered from all places, from all walks of life, wearing all kinds of garb when they would have arrived or agreed to attend, meant the king had furnished wedding garments for all of his guests when they arrived at the banquet.

You can kind of imagine it, I guess, somewhat as like when you go to graduation, you know, no matter how rich or poor you are, no matter what side of town you come from, everybody typically at a graduation is wearing the same thing, right?

[26:41] It's a garment, it's a gown that's furnished by typically your school or your college. And the guilty man, though he personally was responsible for being improperly clad, was addressed kindly and politely by the king.

And he was given an opportunity to justify himself. And he said, you know, in verse 12, it says, he asked, how did you get in here without a wedding clothes, friend? So he calls him friend there. The man was speechless.

So the offending guest, he had no excuse for his behavior when he was questioned. He was caught. And from the way the king asked the question, it's obvious, I think, that the guest was offered an outfit and he refused to wear it because I think his response, let's say he had come in and I didn't see where the gowns were.

You know, I came through the gates, but nobody offered me through the door, but nobody offered me a gown. This is all I had. And that's not what he says. It says he was speechless. And I think we can rephrase the king's remark in this way.

He says, you know, look, you're here under false pretenses. You are deliberately refusing to wear what has been provided. You being here without wedding clothes, it implies that you're in rebellion against all that this wedding feast stands for.

[28:08] And essentially, you know, you're a phony, you're a sham. Arrogantly defying the royal etiquette. And this man, the man, he was determined to call the shots.

What's that? Well known song. When he goes, when he dies, I did it my way. And that was essentially the connotation.

That was his curtain call. Well, in verse 13, this kind king who just one verse before calls him friend and asks him why he's there without the wedding clothes.

He says this. Then the king told the attendants, tie him hand and foot. Throw him outside into the outer darkness, into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I think binding him would have made it impossible for him to reenter the hall and also leave him helpless in the darkness. You know, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[29:10] Quite a distinctive difference from the wedding hall that he had just left. You know, it's interesting. Ever since Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, attempted to please God by offering a sacrifice of his own choosing, people have been trying to come to God on their own terms.

They may fellowship with Christians. They may fellowship with Christians. They may go to church. They may become active in leadership and serving. You know, they may speak of their love of God. Yet they sustain an inner rebellion in their hearts, an inner refusal to accept the gift of righteousness that comes through the King's son, Jesus Christ.

And instead, they cling to something in themselves which they are depending upon to find favor before God. And they refuse to heed the authority and the righteousness of his son.

You know, like the tares that grow among the wheat. They'll coexist for a while with God's children. But on the day of inspection, the day of judgment, their deception will be made plain and their removal will be certain.

Jesus gave a clear warning about this in Matthew chapter seven, verse 21 to 23, reads this way. It says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

[30:53] Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will say to them plainly, I never knew you.

Away from me, you evil doers. Now you may be asking, what is it the wedding? What is the wedding garment that God accepts?

What is the proper wedding garment? Well, what it is, is it is God provided righteousness. And without this, no one can enter the kingdom of God.

Our own righteousness is inadequate because each one of us, whether you're the youngest one here, whether you're the youngest one here, whether you're the oldest one here, whether you're the oldest one here. I think I saw that Frank here just enjoyed a birthday.

Youngest to oldest, we're all without, we all have sin. We all have sin. We're not without it. And so the righteousness that God offers is the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

[31:59] So we have to quit relying on our own righteousness, our own heredity, our own ancestry, or whatever else we think is of value. And we have to rely on Christ alone as our hope of salvation.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of this when he said in chapter 61, verse 10, I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.

The apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, He made him, meaning his son, meaning Jesus Christ, He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

It's that picture of God, of Christ's righteousness being imputed upon us, covering our sin, so that when God looks at us, he sees his son and the righteousness of his son.

He doesn't see the wedding garment, be it our good works, be it our money, be it our prayers, be it our going to church. All of those garments will result in the same thing that we see here in Matthew

22.

[33:19] Only the righteousness of God is the proper attire, the righteousness of his son. Well, following the two previous parables, Jesus had a question for the Jewish leaders.

In each case, they condemned themselves by their answer, knowing their hearts that they were deciding how to trap him and how to condemn him to death.

And he closed this parable with a simple but insightful statement. If the musicians want to come up, verse 14, it says, For many are invited, but few are chosen.

And I don't think it will come as any surprise that scores of people have wondered what this phrase means. I've got about a minute, so I'm not going to go into all the theological components and the differing thoughts of this.

But I think this phrase captures the delicate balance between God's sovereignty and man's will. And that the wedding invitation went out to many. Many. We know that.

[34:22] Many being all. And everyone was told they were welcome to attend the ceremony and the reception for the wedding of the king's son.

Everyone had that opportunity. In the same way, the gospel is to be spread to all peoples of the nations because it is not God's will that a single person would be excluded from his kingdom and perish into outer darkness.

But in the parable, few of those who were invited accepted the call and thereby were among the chosen.

So many do not want God, or at least they don't want God on his terms. And so they reject the invitation. You know, the gracious invitation of God to enter in his fellowship with his son, it's in the form of a command.

And it's very easy. It's not do this. It's not do this. It's not do this. It's not do this. He says, you're invited to the wedding feast. Come. Come.

[35:25] In the book of facts, it says what believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Come. And this garment of Christ's righteousness will be provided.

Come to me with your worries, with your fears, your joys, your sorrows. Come and sit with me. Be with me. Enjoy me. I'm your light.

Come. I am the bread of life. Come. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes unto the Father except by me. And so the question really this morning, or the question when you're out reaching out to people this week is the question of, do you know the joy of the king and his son?

You know, maybe this morning you realize you need to get your wedding garment from Jesus. So will you come? Will you do that? When you reach out to people this week and you see them, what are they relying on?

[36:28] Are we relying on ourselves? Are we relying on the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for the feast. We thank you for the invitation.

Lord, we thank you for your goodness. We thank you for your patience. Lord, you are very patient with myself, Lord.

Very stubborn. Very unwilling, Lord. Yet you say, I've prepared this feast. Come. Lord, we look forward to the day when we will be seeing you face to face, Lord.

And we will sit there at this feast and we will enjoy fellowship. Not for one day, not for one week or one year, but Lord, that we'll enjoy for eternity. Lord, we thank you for the sacrifice of your son, which makes this fellowship possible, Lord.

We thank you for each one here, Lord. We pray for those as they go out this week that they would share the good news with those in a dying and lost world. We thank you for these things in your son's name. Amen.