

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴ “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵ “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. ¹³ “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.” **This is the Gospel of our Lord.**

Dear Friends,

What is the one thing that is always on your mind lately? You might think that is a silly question because everyone is thinking about either the Coronavirus or the election or both. These things have overtaken our lives. When it comes to the virus there are mandates and practices and it seems to have had an impact on so many areas of our lives. And when it comes to politics we can't escape the news and the ads and the yard signs and the abundance of opinions on social media and all around us. Not to say that these things aren't important but is this what we want our lives to be centered on? Should I let politics and the virus rule my life?

We live in a sin infected world and so there will always be some kind of trouble and turmoil but as we consider this parable which Jesus told, he is trying to help us shift our focus to something more important. He wants us to focus on the **“Wedding Feast He has Prepared for us in Heaven.”** As we focus on this feast in heaven we want to note that, **“God wants us at this Feast,”** and he wants us to consider, **“What is our RSVP?”**

I. To help us understand this parable we want to note that the wedding banquet is heaven and the servants who are sent out with the invitations are all those who have gone out with the gospel throughout the ages. This parable covers a period of time from the Old Testament Children of Israel all the way into the future to Judgment Day.

God's preparation for the “wedding banquet” was to send his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to live a perfect life and be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, including your sins and mine. These are words that you have heard many times and we repeat them because they

are a key part of our faith. That has happened and so the banquet is ready and the “king” sends out the invitations.

As we think about this invitation, the Apostle Paul reminds us that, **“God wants all [people] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** (1 Timothy 2:4). So getting back to the parable, **“He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.”** **The 1st invitation** was to those who had been waiting the longest – God’s chosen people – the Children of Israel. They checked it out when Jesus was preaching here on this earth but they decided he just wasn’t the kind of Savior they wanted and so they refused the invitation. They were going to wait for something better.

But the “king” was determined. **“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’”** God is patient as he sent this **second invitation** explaining that this is something you won’t want to miss – there is nothing better – it will be glorious. Yet the response was, **“They paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.”** What an insult! Not only to ignore the invitation but to scorn the one who sent it.

The “king” sent out a **third invitation** but this one went to a whole different group of people – the Gentiles **“and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”** They readily accepted that invitation.

Does this parable make you wonder why God has to continuously invite people into his kingdom? Isn’t heaven something everyone wants? Doesn’t everyone want to be close to God? The sad thing is that there are still many people that wonder if heaven is really for them - if God really wants them in church.

If you have ever asked yourself, “why would God want ME in His kingdom?”, you have missed the point of what God’s love is all about. **If you are human, God wants you.** If you are ANYONE, God wants you. John 3:16 couldn’t be any more clear: **“God so loved the WORLD.”** That means God loves YOU. God wants you. Why else would He have sent His son? Why else would He have given us the Bible?

He has invited you into his kingdom and You don’t have to bring anything. You don’t have to meet any credentials. You don’t have to be better than anyone else in the world. You don’t have to be wearing any special clothing to be invited. You can be naked and lying in a gutter for all God cares. The banquet will be full of people from all walks of society - both high and mighty and low and dirty - **good and bad** is how he describes them. There is no way you could read this parable any other way than that God wants all to be saved. He wants you at His heavenly banquet. **“So what is your RSVP?”**

II. God’s chosen people said, “No.” They rejected the invitation because they had other things on their mind. Jesus said, **“The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come.”** They did not deserve it because they no longer had faith in their hearts and only faith makes a person deserving of heaven. The Gentiles accepted the invitation and they came. As was

the custom, the king provided the wedding clothes. But there was one man who came as he was – he thought his clothes were good enough – he didn't need the special clothes that were provided.

The wedding clothes are a beautiful picture of the robe of righteousness that Christ covers our sins with as he forgives them. Isaiah said, **“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”** (Isaiah 61:10) Yet there was one man who thought his clothes were pretty good all by themselves.

There are many people that still think this way – I can get to heaven myself or I am a good person or God loves me just the way I am – but they leave Jesus out of the equation and then they too will be just like the man without the wedding clothes – speechless, with no defense. If we rely on ourselves and think we don't need God because we can get to heaven by ourselves or think everyone is going to heaven we are sadly mistaken.

God wants us to be saved – that's why he sent his son to pay the price for our sins and the Holy Spirit to create faith in our hearts which seals our invitation to heaven. You might be wondering – okay, that's heaven, and I certainly want to make sure that I am going to be in heaven, but how does this portion of scripture help me today?

This parable reminds us that as recipients of God's invitation we are able to participate in the feast already. Not the full feast but we are able to snack on the appetizers – the assurances and promises of our God. We already have the forgiveness of sins and that banquet in heaven to look forward to and that helps us make it through the week because it gives us a glimpse of what is waiting for us.

The past year has been full of uncertainty in many different areas. Not only do we have the virus and the politics but we also have had fires and hurricanes and riots and shootings. We can spend a lot of time worrying about all these different things but this parable reminds us of what's most important in life – knowing Jesus as our Savior.

In the midst of all this turmoil, God is in control and will carry each and every one of his children through it. This doesn't mean that we won't see more natural disasters nor does it mean that eventually we will have world peace and it may not keep us from difficulties in our life but it does guarantee we will have what we need and things will turn out okay.

Many are invited, but few are chosen. This is God's truth. Our King calls and calls again and again. Sadly, many reject God's call. What's your response? Do you truly appreciate God's grace? After all, that is what gathers us into his kingdom – that is what brings us this wonderful invitation.

So stay close to God, keep his invitation always in front of you and someday you will be seated at the wedding banquet filled with guests. Someday you will rejoice in perfect joy at the wedding feast of the Lamb. And remember – you are already wearing the wedding garment for, **“You are all [children] of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”** (Galatians 3:26,27). Amen.