

Parable Of The Wedding Matthew 22:1-14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today, we will look specifically at the last four verses of our text: *"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."*

Jesus tells this parable about the king giving a wedding feast. Many were invited who did not come – we understand their excuses are simply lame – it is right that they should be uninvited, and those that killed the chauffeurs sent to bring them to the feast should be punished.

But then, the king sends out the servants to gather people, good and bad, to fill the wedding feast. These people were there not because they were initially invited, but because they were brought to the wedding, gathered from the roads.

Can you imagine being thrown out of a wedding to which you were gathered, for wearing the wrong clothes? It almost sounds crazy. Yet, Jesus' parable of the wedding is saying exactly that.

Given that the guests were gathered from off the roads, they probably did not have appropriate clothes for a wedding banquet. So, as they came in, the king provided appropriate clothing for them, fine clothes from the royal clothier were provided for each of the guests.

If you had been brought to the party and told, "The king wants you at this wedding banquet, but you have to take a shower and wear appropriate clothes, specifically these clothes which are your size, would you wear something else? Indeed, who would be so contemptuous of the gift of such fine clothing, to feel that his or her own clothing would be adequate? Yet my friends, that is exactly what happens. There are some who would enter the eternal wedding banquet feast of the Lamb wearing their own clothes.

Of course, this is a parable. So let's define terms. The banquet feast is heaven. Instead of wearing the garments of salvation, called clothing provided by God. Someone has come sporting their own words and their own deeds, as if somehow these are appropriate for heaven.

In the earthly church there are many who have been called. There are in the midst of the church many who have heard the message of salvation and responded to it. But, in their hearts they cling to something within themselves as to why they were called. They feel that there is some small part they have done which will ultimately lead to their being admitted into heaven. These people believe that their own clothing is good enough to wear in heaven. Some then, who belong to the church herself, will be cast out of the eternal feast and enjoy instead the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

My friends, you have been given a garment for the wedding. Our sermons hymn even speaks of how believers are clothed. *Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress; midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.* (Lutheran Service Book #563 vs.1 & The Lutheran Hymnal #371 vs. 1)

That is precisely the garment that you wear as Christians. John's Revelation gives us a vision of the heavenly realms and those gathered at the eternal wedding banquet. Looking out over those gathered he is asked, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" John continues, *And I said to him, "Sir, you*

know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ (Revelation 7:13-14 NKJV)

My dear Christian friends, those who have made their robes white are those who trust solely in the blood of the Lamb. There is no trace left within them of their own righteousness. They believe that they have been called by God into His family, and chosen by Him. God has done this for them, not because of anything within themselves, but because of the gracious mercy of God. They were out wandering, they were brought to the font and clothed with Christ. God removes their filthy deeds and credits Christ's righteousness to them.

Where does this garment come from? Again the book of Revelation informs us from where the fine linen, the wedding garment comes. *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* (Revelation 19:8 KJV) Christ's church is **granted** the fine linen. It is **granted** to those who wear it as a gift! It is not the doing of the saints, but the gracious gift of another. It is the gracious gift of a loving God which makes them saints.

Jesus says, that we did not choose Him, but that He chose us. (John 15:16) It is plain from Scripture that we did not choose God, but in His goodness it was He, who found us, and made us His own – sent out his servants to the roads to bring them in. Yet, many are those who think that they had something to do with it. In their sinful arrogance, they claim their place in God's kingdom was their doing.

Every week the wedding banquet of the Lamb is celebrated. We come into this, God's banquet hall. We feast on heavenly food – His Word and Sacrament. In this banquet hall, there might be some who have come wearing their own clothes rather than the wedding garment given to them. They feel they belong here because of their goodness, the deeds they have done which they believe has qualified them to be here. They are part of the feast today. But, on the last day, the King will come to see the guests. On that day, those who felt it was their own clothing, their own works that earned them the right to be a guest at the wedding, will be cast into darkness.

It is my fervent prayer that none here will be among those cast out on that day. Yet, don't we all want to claim something of ourselves? We all like to think that there is something in us that made God choose us. We all like to feel that in some way, we are contributing to our eternal salvation. We would all like to wear our own clothing to the wedding.

My friends, I encourage you to give up such thoughts. I beg you to ask God for forgiveness for such arrogant thinking, for those thoughts where you claim responsibility for God's work. I invite you to cling instead to His gracious gift of forgiveness.

Wear the garment He has prepared for you, the white robe which was cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, and given to you by God's gracious goodness.

Christ, the Divine tailor came to earth in human flesh. By His perfect life, He wove a garment of perfect righteousness. He stitched it with the thorns that encircled His brow and the nails that pierced His hands and feet. As His lifeblood flowed from the cross, its crimson streams cleansed the robe and purified it to white brilliance.

From the wound in His riven side, blood and water flowed. Today, that blood and water flow from Him to you. You might call them the streams of righteousness, Baptism and the Sacrament of Holy Communion, they come upon you and purify you, they cleanse your robe again and again in His righteousness.

If we were left on our own, we could not produce, nor could we find, a garment that would earn us entrance into that heavenly banquet feast. Thankfully, we have been given a wedding garment to wear to the feast today and for eternity, Christ's own righteousness. The wedding garment we have been given makes us welcome guests at the table of our Lord. We come forward today to partake of His body pierced for us and to drink of His blood shed for us, all this done to grant us forgiveness and cleanse us again with His righteousness. We are welcome,

not because of our own worthiness, but because of the garment of Christ's righteousness, the gift which we wear.

The prophet Isaiah had it so very right when he wrote a couple chapters after our Old Testament lesson: *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* (Isaiah 61:10)

I invite you to rejoice as well, that God has clothed you from on high, that He has given you a wedding garment which will bring you eternal joy. Wear it with pride knowing that it is a gift from the most High God, the Lord of the banquet. Amen.