

Parish of the Divine Love

Sermon Sunday October 11, 2020

Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4: 1-9; Matthew 22: 1-14

Does your soul have the proper garment?

How many times someone has turned your invitation to dinner down for no good reason? How did you feel? Nowadays Covid-19 prevents us from gathering and celebrating, but fellowship is a good time to rejoice and let go some of the anxieties we might have. That's why feast, banquet are vivid biblical symbols of the joy and felicity we will have in heaven, in God's presence. But when we refuse the invitation, we harm ourselves without knowing it with our own disobedience.

In many places in the Gospels, Our Lord reminds us that a life of disobedience doesn't end well. The wedding guests in this parable refused, ignored, or killed the messengers turning down the king's invitation. Sadly, we know many in our culture who proudly refuse to believe in Jesus, ignore his overtures because they're too busy or complacent. Let's look first interiorly for any disobedience that is taking root in us and repent, and then also pray fervently for souls who seem far from the wedding banquet.

The Wedding Banquet in the parable is a metaphor for God's promise of eschatological salvation for his people. It is a picture of the new creation that God promises. The same imagery is used in Revelation 19v7 & 19v9 and is picked up in Revelation 21v2 & 9. This idea of the consummation of the Kingdom as the wedding between Jesus and his people also underlies Ephesians 5v22-33 and 2 Corinthians 11v2. We can therefore conclude that the idea of attending the King's wedding Banquet is a picture of entering God's Kingdom or Heaven or the New Creation.

It is worth remembering that a wedding banquet was a glorious and joyful celebration. The host would supply the very best food and wine possible for his guests (see for example the wedding at Cana – John 2). This wedding banquet was hosted by a king for his son, so it would be a royal wedding. It would be an immense honor to be invited, and the guests would be unlikely to ever experience a feast as lavish as this ever again. It would be a great insult to the King, his honor and generosity as host to refuse to come to the banquet and honor him and his son. The central point of this parable is that the original guests invited to the banquet by the king refuse to come. The king does not respond with immediate judgement but gives them further opportunity to accept his invitation by sending his servants to command them to come. He sends his servants to tell the guests that the dinner is ready, and that the best food has been prepared. However, the guests still refuse to come. They pay no attention to the king's servant. Some attended to their own business. This is an immense insult to the King. They are effectively rebelling against him, refusing his command, and insulting his honor. They are failing to treat him as their king. The rest of them mistreat and kill his servants. The parable illustrates the nature of sin as wicked rebellion and rejection of God, despite his goodness, generosity, and sovereign authority. We have all treated God in this way, but the particular focus of the parable is the sin of the people of Israel in refusing to accept God's invitation to receive his Kingdom by trusting in Jesus.

In the remainder of the parable the king sends his servants out to invite replacement guests to come in and join the wedding banquet he has prepared. The servants are sent to invite everyone and anyone to come. All kinds of people are to be invited to come, "the bad as well as the good", which in the context

probably means the “religious” and the “sinners”. The result is that the King’s purpose is accomplished, because “the banqueting hall was filled with guests”. The original guest’s rebellion and refusal does not cause the King’s plan to fail. It is just that the guests who in fact attend are not those who were originally invited.

We can clearly see this parable being fulfilled in the book of Acts, the rest of the New Testament, and in church history as the good news of the gospel is taken to all people. At the end of Matthew’s gospel Jesus commands his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28v16-20). The parable thus has a double application to us. We are those who have been invited to attend the king’s banquet because the original guests refused to come. We are also the king’s servants who are sent to invite all people everywhere to attend the banquets. So, we must first ask ourselves: have we accepted the invitation, or are we refusing to attend like the first guests? And then we must ask ourselves: are we inviting everyone we can find to come to the king’s banquet?

The final verses of the parable explain how to respond to the king’s invitation, and why it is that some people accept but others reject it. We should not push the imagery too literally. The point of v11-13 is that only those who are properly dressed are qualified to attend the banquet. A person who has come but is not wearing wedding clothes is ejected on the orders of the king. He is thrown outside which means out of God’s presence. This man, who has sought to attend without appropriate clothing, shows that he does not respect the king and he has not truly accepted the invitation. He is a gate crasher coming on his own terms. He is insulting and dishonoring the king just as much as the original guests who refused to come. The parable does not spell out what the wedding clothes signify, but spiritually, it means the outfit of our interior lives, the garments of our soul. The clothing is what we do with our lives, how we treat others, how we serve God and other people. It is necessary that we keep a vigilant eye on the kind of garments we wear inside of us, because at the end of the day, that’s what really matter. The question will be, do our souls have the proper wedding robe? And it is here, on this earth, in this life, that we need to sew that garment with our actions.

Verse 14 ends the parable by providing a summarizing explanation of why it is that the original guests rejected the king’s invitation. It is not that God’s plan in some way failed. Rather it was not his sovereign purpose that all those who were invited would respond positively to his invitation. That’s where our freedom comes in. God created us free of our own choices. It is weird that part of the possibility to choose is the ability to reject God and God’s will.

The invitation is offered widely to all, but only some of those invited respond. At a human level this is because they rejected the invitation, but at a deeper level it is because God’s sovereign purpose is being worked out. What is clear is that it is not our role or responsibility to try to guess who God has chosen. We are to invite everyone, knowing that some will respond whilst others will reject. All we can know is that a person who responds to the invitation does so because they have been chosen by God to be amongst his people. This truth should be liberating and encouraging for evangelism. The way that people respond to the invitation we issue on God’s behalf is not ultimately our responsibility. Our task is simply to issue the invitation to people wherever we find them.

He is the Lord of the dinner, of the kingdom, and of salvation, which He pours out as a gift upon all men, and which is received by grace through faith by believing His Word and trusting in His promises. It is only those who wear the wedding garment of Christ’s righteousness who will be able to attend the feast. All the others have forced their way into the feast, but they will not remain. But have no fear! The call is

the Gospel, and if you believe the Word of God and trust in Him, you have the garment, and you have been chosen. If you try to live a godly life, loving God, and your neighbors, you will sew beautiful garments for your soul to attend the wedding. So repent. Be dressed in the holiness and perfection of Jesus. Come to the wedding feast. Hear God's invitation that your soul may live. And don't be afraid to invite others to this feast no matter who they are. Amen.