



Devotionals: 15 – 21 October 2023

Turn with me in your Bible to Matthew 22:1-14

Let's read together: 8 “Then he told his servants, ‘The banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Go then to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.’ 10 So those servants went out on the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding banquet was filled with guests. 11 When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed for a wedding. 12 So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here

without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. 13 “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him up hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

In this parable of the wedding feast, we discovered that Jesus spoke this parable in the context of hostility. The chief priests and Pharisees were seeking to kill Jesus. He had entered Jerusalem for the Passover and was teaching the people and was pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. And instead of repenting, they resisted God and tried to kill his Son.

Now, as we saw last time, the question posed for each of us to answer in this parable is: How Will You Respond to God's Invitation to God's Kingdom? God is inviting you to be a part of God's Kingdom. How have YOU responded to that invitation?

Well, we saw last time the example of the Jews – especially of the Pharisees and scribes – and God's invitation to them. We saw the wedding feast prepared by the king for his son. We saw the people being invited and their shocking refusal of that invitation. We saw the persistence of the king's invitation to them and their persistent refusal of the invitation – some being ambivalent about it and some being antagonistic and even homicidal.

And the Scripture ends with the destruction of those who had been invited. So, the Jews had been invited to the Kingdom, but they for the most part refused the invitation. That's basically what we saw in verses 1 through 7 of Matthew 22.

But now things change in verse 8 to the end of the parable. Because in verse 8, we see the invitation – not offered only to the Jews – but we see the invitation going out to everyone. Reread verses 8-14.

So, the refusal of those who were initially invited does not change the reality that there is still a wedding feast to conduct. The king will have his wedding feast for his son – and if those who were originally invited didn't want to come, then he'll just open the invitation to everyone!

And that's where we come in. Because of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews so long ago, the Gospel invitation went out to the Gentiles – and most everyone who is hears this message. We have no right to demand to be invited to God's Kingdom, yet **ALL** have been invited. Yes, especially you.

The king gives his servants new orders – go out and find anyone to come to this wedding feast for my son! And so, they do in verse 10. So the servants went out into the highways, into the streets/on the roads and gathered together/gathered all/as many people as they found/could find, both bad/evil and good:

And isn't this a humbling reality? Let me ask you – ***where did God's servants find you? Where were you when God – through one of his servants – invited you to his kingdom? What “highway(s)” of life were you traveling? Just “out there” somewhere? Wandering?***

No doubt, some of us were upstanding moralistic/upright people. Maybe you were the “good” that the servants found. But equally, some of us were in that other category. We were the “bad” or the “evil.” We were up to no good. We were rebellious.

In this parable, typically, if these servants were to find someone who was rebellious toward the king, they would be executed! But in verse 10, when the servants come, they don't execute – **they invite**. We deserved execution. Instead, we're given a gracious invitation. And by the way, this isn't the main thrust of this parable, but who are the king's servants now? These servants that the king commissioned to go out and invite into his kingdom – who are these people? Can you look around and see any of his servants?

You are his servants. And you have some inviting to do, don't you? You've gone from being the invited to being the inviters – with the hope that some whom you invite will invite yet more who will invite others and so on.

I'm not talking about simply inviting people to our worship services – though there's nothing wrong with doing that. I'm talking about inviting people to God's Kingdom – to receive God's Son Jesus Christ by faith. To repent of their sins and trust in God's Son. That's what we need to be about.

We see the efforts of the king's servants in verse 10. The wedding/wedding hall/wedding banquet was furnished/filled with guests/dinner guests. The king's banquet is filled with those who were not originally called or invited.

And this really corresponds to our present reality. There are many, many folks who have – from external appearances – accepted God's invitation to God's Kingdom. God continues to send God's servants out, for the past two thousand years, to proclaim God's Kingdom and invite both Jews and Gentiles to that Kingdom. We give thanks that God's Kingdom seems to be filled with those who have responded "Yes" to the invitation.

But the shocking reality that confronts us is that not everyone who has externally responded to God's invitation to God's Kingdom is going to be accepted by the King. Because we see in the last four verses of this parable that not all who are called – or invited – to God's Kingdom are chosen or accepted by the King.

Now, apparently, wedding clothes would have simply been clean clothing. This man is one of the many who were invited to the wedding feast for the king's son. He's sitting there with all the other invited guests. But he doesn't have the proper attire.

And the troubling reality is that there are – in churches across the world – people who come and they listen, and they sing and they give. But they're not clothed... in Christ's righteousness. They have on – in God's eyes – their own filthy rags of their own self-righteousness.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:8-9, "...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:" So, all of God's true people have this righteousness that comes through faith in Christ and not by your own merit or effort. And this righteousness is pictured as clothing – a wedding garment in this parable. But as we see in this parable, there is this one guest who doesn't have this wedding clothing on. Why? He's been invited. He's accepted the invitation. But he's not wearing wedding clothing. Why?

That's what the king wants to know in verse 12. Because you need wedding clothes to get into a wedding feast. Even in our super-relaxed culture, there is certain clothing that indicates that you are going to a wedding or other special event. But this person came in without that kind of clothing. The king has a fair question. And one that should be answerable.

The inappropriately dressed guest could perhaps point to a lack of money. But surely if that were the case – that this man is impoverished, and therefore unable to buy wedding clothes – the gracious king who so patiently invited all sorts of guests and was willing to provide them with all sorts of excellent and costly food could surely provide the necessary attire for this man. In fact, some say that at these weddings the host would provide these wedding garments to each guest. Well, maybe the man somehow was unaccustomed to the marital practices of the area and didn't know the requirement of the correct clothing. But if that were the case, you could assume again that the king could make some provision for this man.

But what we see in this parable the man offers no defense at all. He gives no reason for his refusal to be dressed in the proper

clothing for this event at the end of verse 12. This man represents those who seemed to accept God's invitation to God's Kingdom. They live among the people of God, but do not have Christ's righteousness. They are still dressed in their own filthy rags of self-righteousness and sin.

And if that's the case for you here today – and you refuse to repent and receive Jesus Christ – then you will be speechless at the Judgement. You will have nothing to say. And that really is a terrifying position to find yourself in. Because there is indeed Judgement coming for all who are apart from Christ, as in verse 13.

Well, why does this happen this way? How is it that so many are invited to God's kingdom but so few enter it eternally? Jesus explains that puzzling reality in the last verse of this parable – verse 14. For many are called/invited, but few are chosen.

Many were called or invited in this parable, weren't they? You had the folks whose invitation was assumed, and they represent the Jews who were the first to be invited to God's Kingdom. You have the good and the bad whom the servants could find in the highways. They represent the Gentiles that God is now inviting into God's Kingdom. And the wedding banquet ended up being filled with guests. Truly, many have been – and are being even now – called.

So, are you called or invited to Christ's Kingdom? Of course, you are. The very fact that you are hearing the words of Christ from this passage in Scripture assures you that you have been invited to God's kingdom. You are one of the many who are called.

But are you chosen? Here's the key – are you clothed in Christ's righteousness? Maybe you are a good person. People like you. But inwardly you think that you'll be alright in the end because you are a decent, kindhearted, warm human being. You work hard. You try your best. And in the end, God will accept you.

That is what you'll be thinking... until the moment you hear – “depart from me”. You're wearing the wrong clothing! Everyone else might miss that fact – that you're not in the proper attire. The other invitees to the wedding feast might miss it. The people who invite you to the feast might miss it. But God certainly will not. God will see that you are dressed in your own righteousness – and that will not be good enough for entrance into God's Kingdom.

Change your clothes. Abandon your own way and your own righteousness – and put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We're all called. Only a few are chosen. Demonstrate that you are chosen by trusting Jesus Christ today. Amen.

PRAYING TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER –
YOU'RE NOT ALONE, LET US PRAY WITH YOU & FOR YOU
PRAYERS WILL BE ANSWERED

- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** will be having brain surgery to remove a tumor on 26 October 2023. Our hope and prayer is for a successful surgery and a speedy recovery; especially healing from the Epileptic seizures. She is very grateful for your love, prayers, and support. Consistent prayers for Mr. Pat and the Family as they care for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: **Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Bro. Bob Krell** is rooted in our hearts and prayers as we shower him and the Family with our love, care, and support. Bro. Bob is at home. He will be receiving in-home care to build up his strength. The Family is grateful for all your prayers and support. We continue to pray for Bro. Bob's healing, restoration, and strength. Thank you, God, for hearing and answering our prayer. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.**
- **Mr. Michael Cahoon**, son of Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Mr. Mike is going through chemotherapy. As Believers, we know prayer is the most powerful action you can take for loved ones facing cancer. Don't hold back; “The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth (Psalm 145:18).” Lord Jesus Christ, we call upon your blessed Name and we pray for your merciful heart to surround Mr. Michael with love, strength, and courage and we ask Your hands to touch him with the power of healing. May he be directed to the right treatment in Your blessed Name as we ask You Lord to represent the physicians, nurses, and medical care aids and administer them in Your spirits. May every cancerous cell be cast out and replaced with good ones. May every spot of this deadly cell be

wiped out by Your powerful hands. Amen. Cards and notes filled with prayers and hopes for miraculous healing can be sent to: **Mr. Michael Cahoon, C/O: Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, 1615 Beverly Lane, WI 53090.**

- **Mr. Robert (Bob) Kuhaupt** is still in the healing hands of our Great Physician. Healing God, be near Mr. Bob in his time of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Bob's strength and courage may not fail; heal him according to your will; and help him always to believe that what happens to him here is of little account if You hold him in eternal life, loving Lord and caring God. Amen. Please send your prayers of healing and support to: **Mr. Robert (Bob) and Ms. Joy Kuhaupt, Sussex Mills Apartments, W240 N6345 Maple Ave. #116, Sussex, WI 53089.**
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** has returned home and is grateful for all your prayers and cards of encouragement and support. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: **Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Tom Damp** has been comfortable and safe in his home for years. This has been possible primarily due to home healthcare services. However, with significant changes in coverage from health insurance, availability of in-home health care personnel, and other life circumstances, Mr. Tom is having to make unexpected decisions; stay in his home or transition to assisted living. He asks for your prayers and care as God reveals, God's plan for his new season. Caring Father, we thank you for the opportunity we have as a church family to pray and care for Mr. Tom Damp. We ask that you bless him with the resources to keep safe from harm. Please surround this whole process with your wisdom and mercy, Lord. We pray for Mr. Tom's health and care in this whole process. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen. Card and noted can be mailed to: **Mr. Tom Damp, 1707 Sunset Ridge Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- No one enters this life a follower of Christ. If we are God's children, it is because we were born spiritually sometime after we were born physically. God uses our prayers as one of the means of drawing people, including our grandchildren, to God. We lift up prayers of healing and strength for **Mr. Ben Barth**, fiancé of Ms. Heather Wolf, granddaughter of Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge. Mr. Ben has been given a new heart and new lungs but is experiencing kidney concerns. Cards of prayers for healing and restoration can be mailed to: **Mr. Ben Barth, 969 Tuscola Lane, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- We remain in prayer and support for **Mrs. Ann Cording**. Great Physician, you can heal us in a heartbeat. We pray for God's miraculous healing today. Take our pain away, according to Your will, in Your time. We're not promised a painless life on this earth, but You do want us to live a happy one. Send Your Spirit to help us see past our circumstances and onto Your calling on our lives. Sickness and injury can't stop God-placed dreams. Fill our hearts with hope as we wait on You to move in our lives and flow out from our hearts. In Jesus' Name, Amen. Cards and notes of love and care can be mailed to: **Mrs. Ann Cording, 1416 S. Silverbrook Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We're keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: **Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: **Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to **Mr. Allan and Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.**

We continue to celebrate our 175th year of service, commitment and Methodism in West Bend, Wisconsin.

"Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Present, Anticipating Our Future"

Prayer: O mighty and holy Father, thank you for all you have done to invite me to your feast of joy and love. Thank you for the price Jesus paid to make my inclusion at this great banquet even possible. Please fill me with your Spirit as I try to live for you in ways that bring you glory and that honor the sacrifice Jesus made to include me. In Jesus' precious and holy name, I offer my thanks. Amen.

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin