

20th S after Pentecost (10/15) SM, SJ

Matthew 22:1-10 - 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 He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' 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."

In the name of Christ, our heavenly Bridegroom, dear fellow redeemed:

On those really, really big and important in our lives, we want the most important people in our lives there to share the day with us: our confirmation, high school and college graduations, our wedding, the baptism of our children, a golden wedding anniversary – those are some of those times.

Yet even though we may invent all those friends and family, they won't all make it to the big event. They may be sick, have other plans, it may be too far away, but they won't all make it, even if they are all invited.

The Wedding Banquet Will Be Full!

1. We are invited
2. Many refuse their invitation

1. We are invited

Jesus begins with the words: **The kingdom of heaven is like.** What he tells us today is a historic truth. It was scriptural truth during the lifetime of Adam and Eve. It is true in our own generation and will remain true for all future generations.

This particular parable was spoken in the city of Jerusalem on Tuesday of Holy Week. It was spoken to the Jewish leaders, including the chief priests and the Jewish elders, who have been challenging his authority to preach and teach.

When they ask him, **By what authority are you doing these things?** and also, **Who gave you that authority?**, Jesus tells them a number of parables, including this one. His early parables had irritated them and upset them and we are told that they had already decided to arrest him and put him to death.

One reason Jesus spoke in parables was to teach us spiritual truths. But another reason was to hide those same truths for those who don't believe. **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.**

In Jesus' parables **the kingdom of heaven** refers to many different things. Sometimes it means heaven, but other times it teaches us something about the church or about the working of God's Word in our hearts and in our lives.

No matter which of those meanings we apply here, it comes out the same. God by his Word has made us members of his church. He has used his mighty and powerful Word to create faith in our hearts. And finally by faith through the Word and his church, our God finally takes us to himself in heaven.

It would be wrong to assume that because someone didn't come to our wedding that they weren't invited or we didn't want them to come. They were invited. We wanted them to come, but whatever reason, they didn't

come.

Jesus wants us to know today that we are invited. Jesus says to us: **I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'**

All this is by invitation. We don't earn our way to heaven. Salvation is a gift of God and with Reformation around the corner, it's good for us to remember that we cannot save ourselves but God saves us by grace.

2. Many refuse their invitation

Even though we are invited, many sadly refuse their invitation by God.

Jesus continued in his parable: **But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.**

If you were here a few weeks ago, this will sound fairly familiar, because in the parable of the tenants, the renters of the vineyard acted very much the same way as the people invited to the wedding banquet.

Certainly there are those today who don't believe in God, who reject the Bible, who don't put their trust in the cross of Christ as their way to eternal life. But what about us? What about you and me? How can we be in danger of rejecting God's invitation?

Our sinful nature urges us constantly to believe that somehow, some way that we save ourselves or that we help save ourselves. One way we can all do this is finding someone who is a greater sinner than we are. That person is lazier than we are. This person makes more but gives less. We never got sent to the principal's office! We never cheated on a test! We never cheated our taxes or our spouse! We never have been drunk! We've never been high! We never smoked cigarettes! We've never been arrested or spent a night in jail! We've been married to one person and never anyone else! It's easier to count the number of times we've missed church than the times we've been in church!

Our sinful nature also likes to minimize or make our sins seem small or unimportant. It was only a white lie. Everyone else does it. Everyone says bad words when they stub a toe or cut a finger. Who doesn't look at a really gorgeous woman or a handsome hunk? Yet if your sins were really so minor, so easily overlooked by God, then God wouldn't have sent his Son into the world and Christ would not have been put to death for our sins.

All those things may be true. But remember, we don't invite ourselves to heaven, God invites us. We don't save ourselves even if there are worse sinners. And shouldn't we like Paul consider ourselves to be the worst of sinners?

It's certainly true that God wants all people to be saved. Yet not everyone will be saved. Even if the government offered free flu shots to everyone, polls indicate over 40% of Americans wouldn't take advantage of their free shot. Even when God offers heaven free to sinners by the sacrifice of his son, sadly not everyone takes advantage of his invitation.

Don't refuse God's invitation to heaven through the cross of Christ.. Never think that God doesn't want you in heaven. You and I invited to the wedding banquet of God's Son in heaven! Amen.