

Your Wedding Invitation!

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

"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.'

"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. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 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.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.

"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.'

"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

When we speak to children, we often use word pictures or illustrations to help them understand. Instead of explaining to them the danger of arrogance, you may tell them the story of the tortoise and the hare. Instead of explaining to them the value of hard work, you tell them the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. God talks to us in the same way. It is enough for God to tell us that our sins are forgiven and we will spend eternity in heaven. But to help us understand this, he uses parables.

"The kingdom of God is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son." A child can understand this parable. The King obviously is God our Father. The son is his Son, Jesus Christ. The wedding is the joining or marriage of Jesus Christ with his bride, the Church, both now through faith and in the future as we physically when we join Christ in heaven. The servants delivering the invitations are the pastors and teachers since Adam and Eve up to now.

I am sure you have received many wedding invitations before, but nothing compares to the wedding invitation. Don't miss this one. It is by invitation only, and don't worry; the Lord will make sure you are dressed properly.

I. By invitation only.

The truth is, you don't need an elaborate service or reception for a wedding. You don't need a church full of people. You don't need a fancy dinner and dance later. All that the state requires is that the person performing the wedding is one who can legally do this, and two witnesses. That's it.

But there is nothing wrong with big weddings, either. The couple and their parents are so happy, they want others to join them in celebrating. This is why they provide the meal and everything for free. This is their way of sharing the joy.

But anyone who has been involved in a wedding knows you can't invite everyone. The church can't hold all of them. The hall would be too small. The bill for the meal would be too high. So you have to draw the line somewhere. "Let's invite Aunt Mabel, but not your friend's college roommate." So weddings are by invitation only.

The kingdom of God is by invitation only. But God doesn't draw a line through the guest list. He invites everyone. ***"Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 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."*** The invitation is extended to the murderer as well as the upstanding citizen. It is extended to the prostitute and the sweet little old lady.

How can God do that? The answer is grace. Do we really understand what that word means? It means we do not deserve it. It means we can't compel God to invite us. Yes, guests usually bring gifts to weddings, but they don't have to, and you shouldn't invite only your rich friends and relatives so you get expensive gifts. The wedding is about sharing our joy, not your money.

So this wedding is all about God and his attitude toward us. We "can't" get invited. We have no right to be there. But God invites us anyways. Sadly, not all attend. ***"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.' 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."*** God's guests didn't come. They were more interested in working that day or staying at home. And it wasn't because they were too busy. When servants came to remind them of the date, they harassed them, even killed them. They ultimately hated the king.

Why would people ignore God's invitation? There are various excuses. What does the gospel do for me today? I can't accept the fact that there is nothing good that is in me. I love the world too much. And what will happen? ***"The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."*** If you love the world that much, well,

you will join it in judgment.

God invites you. Don't throw the invitation away. Rather, accept the invitation. You do this when you believe and are saved. Just as you put the wedding on your calendar, you look forward to this wedding banquet, and it doesn't start just in heaven. It is every time you spend time with God in his Word. You remind yourself weekly at church or daily in your devotions that God is inviting you.

So this wedding is by invitation only. And it is a dress up affair, but don't worry. God will provide you with the proper clothes.

II. Wear the appropriate clothing.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 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.' For many are invited, but few are chosen."

We have to understand that oriental or far eastern cultures do weddings a little differently. The one hosting the wedding provides clothing for everyone. Imagine that. It usually costs thousands of dollars for a wedding dress, tuxedos and wedding dresses for the wedding party. Now imagine you have to buy a nice tux for every male guest and an elegant evening gown for each female guest? And we are not talking about off the rack stuff. It has to be like the stuff you see at state dinners. If that was the case, I guarantee that weddings today would be much smaller.

But in Jesus day, the wedding guests would all be provided with clothes fitting for a royal wedding. No expenses are spared for this. The Lord has invited you and he provides you with the clothing that is fitting for such a banquet. What are they? This parable launches us forward to the book of Revelation where God gave John a picture of heaven, the wedding banquet. In chapter seven he says, ***"Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"***

The wedding clothes God provides are the only ones that would be appropriate for heaven. Those clothes are Christ himself. Like a great, white, silk, expensive robe, we wear Christ already now through faith. The robe is spotless because it has been washed in his blood. The stains of sin and guilt are wiped clean. So the stains are gone, but notice that the robe is white. It is because of the life Christ lived here on earth. He lived a holy life, perfect before God and before the law. The law said, "Do this," and he did that. The law said, "Don't do that," and he didn't. God looks at us, clothed in Christ, clothed in his perfect holiness; we are pure, holy, and acceptable and would fit right in with holy angels and a holy God.

But in the parable is a man who is out of place. The king gave him the clothes, but he chose not to wear them. He thought his clothes were good enough though they appeared ratty and dirty compared to all the rest. Remember, God invites all people to his banquet. He doesn't draw a line and say, "Not you." It doesn't matter how terrible of a sinner you might be. So we fit in, he gives us the proper garment, the robe of Christ's Righteousness.

So why would anyone say no to these holy clothes? Too many think they are good enough and want to come to God as they are and not as Jesus is. They may appear pretty fancy and good amongst fellow sinners on earth, but before God, all the filth of their sin and imperfect lives stick out. Remember the first congregation who heard this parable. He was speaking to Pharisees and unbelieving Jews. Sure, they were better than others, giving generously to church, speaking loud prayers, with impeccable church attendance. But at the throne of God, they are not good enough. And since they wanted God to judge them by their own merits, he will grant them their wish. ***"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.' 'For many are invited, but few are chosen.'"***

This parable explains how Christ died for the sins of the world, but not all will be in heaven. Those who think they are good enough by themselves will be turned away as they realize they are not good enough. But those who realize they are never good enough will find themselves fitting in because they set aside their measly, torn, dirty clothes at the door and wear Christ and his righteousness. They fit in perfectly because Jesus fits in perfectly.

So, do you want to come? Do you want to join the best, fanciest, most special wedding banquet ever? God is inviting you. He will make sure you fit in perfectly through Christ. Amen.