

Will We Accept Jesus' Invitation?

Scripture: Matthew 22:1 – 14

Jan. 21st, 2024

Installation of Officers Sunday

Today's Gospel passage includes a very strange parable. Some New Testament scholars suggest that Matthew may have combined several parables into what we know as the Parable of the Wedding Feast. This may explain why the story seems disjointed.

The beginning of the parable is simple enough – A king is preparing a wedding banquet for his son. This will be one of the most joyful occasions imaginable for the king and his son. But oddly enough, those who were invited refuse to come. And apparently, all of them refuse to come!

In response, the king tries to make the banquet more appealing by telling the prospective guests what food will be awaiting them. Still no one comes! In fact, some of those invited kill the servants who have come on the king's behalf which seems more than a little bizarre!

At this point, we may wonder how this parable has gotten so dark. But it gets darker still – The infuriated king sends out his army to track down the murderers and level their cities!

Next, the king seems to have moved past his anger and he has his servants go into the streets and invite anyone they can find. Invite everyone! But when the king arrives at his son's wedding banquet, he sees a man without the traditional wedding garment on. The king orders his servants to tie up this guest and throw him out!

But how was the wedding guest supposed to get a garment at such a short notice? Also, you have to wonder what the married son and his new wife think about all this. This is probably not the wedding banquet they were expecting and hoping for!

So, overall, what is going on? What is Jesus' larger point in this parable?

Mainly, the parable is about responding to an invitation. And more importantly, the way you respond! All of us know Jesus' invitation into the reign of God. All are invited – let me repeat that – all are invited! Yet the invitation requires us to put Jesus' words into action. It is not enough to say that we have accepted Christ. It is not enough to say that we have accepted his invitation. We have to come to the feast and wear the right garment!

In another words – we have to show that we have accepted the invitation. You have to show that you have accepted the invitation!

So what should we do to avoid being murdered by the enraged king? So what do we have to do so that our cities are not destroyed? So what do we have to do so that we are not tossed into darkness? Or to put it more positively – what do we have to do to gain admittance to the joyful banquet that God is throwing?

Jesus' answer is clear. It is found in the 25th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus gives us a litmus test for entrance into the banquet. Jesus gives us a way into the kingdom of heaven. It all depends on how we treat the least of our brothers and sisters.

Listen now to this passage from Matthew 25:42 – 45.

I was hungry and you did not give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you did not give me anything to drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. I was naked and you did not give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

Then they will reply – 'Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not do anything to help you?' Then he will answer – 'I assure you that when you have not done it for one of the least of these, you have not done it for me.'

Here is the litmus test – Do we feed the hungry? Do we clothe the naked? Do we welcome the stranger?

If NO – well then we are as bad as the people who did not bother to come to the banquet. If NO – then we are like the fellows who did not bother to get dressed for the occasion.

Most of Jesus' parables focus on the rewards of the reign of God, but this parable of the Wedding Feast, focuses on what happens if we do not respond adequately to the invitation.

So which will it be? Are we coming or not? Are we loving or not?

So which will it be? Are you coming or not? Are you loving or not?

Today we will be installing our 2024 church officers. They have answered 'YES' to Jesus' invitation to serve this church and its ministry.

Would these people stand when their name is read and the office they wish to serve in are announced.

Let us now read 'A Disciples Affirmation' #355

Those standing, please remain standing as we install you as our 2024 church officers.

(Do Installation of 2024 Church Officers)

(Do Blessing of 2024 Church Officers)

Blessed Jesus, we give you thanks that you invite us to your great feast. We ask that you prepare us to join with so many others, past and present, at your table of love. You have set it here before us. As we accept your mercy and forgiveness, may our lives manifest your love for all people.

We come to this table because we are Disciples of Christ ...