

Be Fully Prepared to Come To the Banquet (Matthew 22:1-14)

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Date: 26 January 2025

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[0 : 00] Great. Let's get our Bibles out, and we're going to hear from God's Word. So I'm just going to read the passage that we're about to hear preached from Pastor Albert. And so please, if you turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 22, as we continue our series in this gospel.

So Matthew chapter 22. I'll give you a moment to turn there or to switch your phones there. Matthew chapter 22. This is the Word of God.

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.

[1 : 16] 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.

So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the street and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, 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. He asked, How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend? 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.

And this is the word of God. Pastor Albert. Thank you. Good afternoon.

[2 : 25] We'll talk about, do I have a flicker? Do I have a flicker? Can I? Oh, sorry. You've given to me.

I'd have forgotten about it. Okay. Okay. Okay. It's about the banquet. There's a parable about banquets.

A wedding banquets. I think one of the things as a pastor, one of the most enjoyable moments, is to see people get married.

And especially for those, when you kind of watch them grow, and to maturity, and to get married, like Venus, like, yeah, Isaac, Gary, you know, it's been such joy for me, to attend those banquets.

if you are invited, right, how would you feel? You'll feel very honored, right?

- [3 : 30] You'll be very happy to join in, right? So, this is exactly what the parable says today. Matthew chapter 22, which I just, Pastor William just read it for us.
- It actually, it's very similar to another parable that was actually recorded in Luke 14. We'll see it in a moment. But, Jesus actually says, through this parable, now, the parable, the kingdom of God, is not a wedding banquet, okay?
- But the parable was saying that, the kingdom of God, is like, a banquet. It's like, a king, who is, preparing, a wedding banquet, for his son.
- So, I don't know what it will be like in heaven. Is it a real banquet? I mean, how big is that banquet going to be? Or, what sort of food are there?
- Just imagine, you can eat and eat and eat, and you will not be full. And there's choices of food, and you can eat all day, all night for eternity. How good would that be?
- [4 : 42] But, I think, I believe that what Jesus was trying to convey, was that, God is inviting, all, all right? To, to join in, to his, the most, extravagant, joyful, satisfying, banquet, for all.
- Now, initially, it was, inviting, the Jews, all right? Because Jesus was speaking, to the Jews, to the Jewish leaders, to the Pharisees, to the scribes, at the time.
- But, the parable, carried on to say, because, they rejected. And, the invitation, has been, extended, to others.
- The others, who were not called, at the beginning. So, for us, I believe, as, we were not, chosen people of God, all right?
- We were supposed to be Gentiles, okay? And, we are included. So, as we read today, this, this parable, let us, gladly come.
- [5 : 49] But, but something, in the, a catch, in the, in the parable. you need to wear, the wedding dress, wedding clothes. Now, what that, what was that? So, let us come, and be fully, prepared, to join in, this, ultimate, heavenly, feast.
- Let's have a look at it, all right? As, Jesus, taught a lot of parables. Now, I, I believe, I, I, I, I, parables were actually kingdom parables.
- What that means? It was not just for teaching ethical behaviors. It was not just telling you how to be good, but it was actually pointing to the kingdom of God.
- That means for all the parables he was speaking, he was asking us to realize that the kingdom has come.
- The kingdom has come. It's when Jesus came, and Jesus died on the cross. That was what they call the inauguration of the kingdom.
- [7 : 28] And by the time Jesus comes back, that's the time of the consummation, and that is the age, what we call the interim age, all right, in this square here.
- We are here. And Jesus, through those parables, wanted us to know the kingdom has arrived, and we are to respond to his call.
- So now, let us bear in mind, all the parables, you know, before I went to seminary, I thought a lot of parables were teaching me how to behave myself.
- Yes, in a way, yes. But the primary purpose of Jesus speaking those parables is wanting us to realize that the kingdom has come, and the kingdom will come fully when he returns.
- And how you and I, as Christians, how do we respond to this kingdom, all right? Last week, Pastor Williams spoke about this promised king, shows his divine authority as he enters the city, okay?
- [8 : 40] He rebukes the barren worship and the judges unfruitful Israel. And now, he carries on. There was two parables that actually he spoke last time in this previous chapter, and this is the third parable, okay?

As I said before, it's very similar to Luke 14, verses 15 to 24. Still the same as a banquet. It was the host who invites people, and the people didn't want to join, all right?

It was excuses, and actually, it's a song actually written about this parable, okay? I'll sing it for you, okay? If you knew that, you'll be about my age, okay?

I cannot come, I cannot come to the banquet. Don't trouble me now. I have married a wife. I have bought me a cow.

I have fields and commitments that cause a pretty sum. Pray, hold me, excuse, I cannot come. And then they talk about a man has a field, has a feast, and a fine estate in town.

[9 : 50] And all he calls, all these people come, and people say, I cannot come, I cannot come. I married a wife. I bought me a cow. And it's very similar to this parable here.

People making excuses. The wedding, the banquet is ready, but the people did not want to come. So let's have a look at this parable.

What was he saying about the kingdom of God? We look at it from three perspectives. One is the king. Second, the banquet.

And then the guests. Firstly, the kingdom of heaven is like a king. He was a king. Yes, he provided a wedding banquet for his son, but initially he was a king.

Now, what was this king like? Now, a king in those times, it was an absolute authority, right? An ultimate ruler, and his word was law.

[10 : 54] I think for Chinese, when we read this, I'm not sure about you, you know, your age, your key New Zealand-born Chinese, all right? But in Hong Kong, or in China, when we read about king, we don't think about the British king, you know, who had no power, right?

But a Chinese emperor, his word was power, right? And even when it was in the Chinese history, when the emperor wants his officials to die, the officials could not reject.

It's like that. So the king has absolute power. Same with the Jewish setting. Yeah, same.

And this king, when Jesus described, in this parable, firstly, he sent servants to invite people to his banquet, all right?

Not just once, not even twice, three times. And the king really, really wanted people to join in his banquet.

[12 : 08] But Jesus was trying to show the graciousness of God. He wants people to join in to his provision, all right?

But when the people rejected, and even there were people who killed his servant, the king was enraged. And he sent his army.

And sometimes, I think that's, we find it hard to try to grasp the idea, can this God be that cruel?

But actually, both are the same attributes of God. He's a gracious God, but also, he is a righteous God.

When the people paid no attention, they went off. And even when some seized his servant, mistreated them, and killed them.

[13 : 14] And actually, Jesus was referring the Jews at that time. And also, prior, Jerusalem always been a rebellious city.

And Jesus was trying to say, you know, God would judge them. He would send his army and destroy those murderers. And those, his hearers, would know what Jesus was talking about.

And Jesus, and they would have their ears really raised up and hear, you're talking about us. You're condemning us. Right?

That's why they were so crossed with Jesus. And they wanted to kill Jesus. And when the parable was telling that the king would send his army and destroy those murderers and burn the city.

And Jesus actually was foretelling one day, God will judge Jerusalem. And indeed, that happened 30-something years down the road.

[14 : 34] In 1870, the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. So, I think, I think, as Christians, we need to beware.

What Jesus was trying to say in the parable, that God is not just a softy, softy, you know, just a granddad like me, just look, treating Aniah, everything's fine, everything's lovely.

No, God has a standard. When right is right, wrong is wrong. God loves me. But if I do wrong, he will not consider that it's okay.

He will discipline me. All right? So, as Christians, when we look at the parables, we need to know, we're thankful for the graciousness of God. For, yeah, including me in his salvation, including me in his banquet, welcomes me into the kingdom.

But, it's also because I'm his child. When I do wrong, he will discipline. This morning, when Pastor Francis actually came and shared about Psalm 23, it was quite an illustration about how God would use his rod.

[15 : 53] All right? We think God, the shepherd uses rod to fight, chase away, to hit the wild animals. But, in fact, at present days, he shared that the shepherds in Israel, they actually use the rod to actually hit the lamb's foot so that they won't go astray.

And when he was hurt, the shepherd would carry him into the pen and nurture him. And through those times, the sheep, the lamb would get to know the shepherd a lot more.

Relationships build. And this is what God may be doing to us. When we go astray, God will discipline me. But he's not going to kill me. He's not going to break my foot.

He's going to use those times to nurture the relationships. Sometimes it can sound cruel. But think about it in our lives.

God loves me. But God also disciplined me. Have a look at the next one. The banquet.

[17 : 13] The banquet. The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepares a wedding banquet for his son. Okay? Actually, God has invited many in verse 3, verse 4, verse 5.

Already said that he has invited. And many of them did not pay attention. All right? But that banquet was actually ready for all.

I think it was in that kind of a culture today we may not understand. We cannot comprehend. It's what they call the honor and shame culture in the Oriental and the Palestinian setting.

All right? When, obviously, when you're invited to a banquet, you feel honored. Right? But for those, for the host, for the guests who come to the banquet, they are honored too.

If you do not come with no valid reasons, they will feel shameful. Because I invited all you guys for no apparently good reasons.

[18 : 34] You refuse to come. They, he would feel, he would lose face. Mou min. Right? Shameful. Now, this is something I think we, we may not be able to understand.

You know? We try to invite people and, and, and, and, all this different reasons. They did not come. Okay? And you don't expect, you know, the king will send his troops, an army, and to burn the city.

Right? You don't expect, if, say, someone invites me to his wedding, to their wedding, and then, and suddenly the next day, cops come knocking on my door. Hey, you're arrested.

You know, we cannot, we cannot understand that. Right? Or, or, someone drives his car, smash my front door. Right? Because I did not attend the banquet.

But it was in that honor and shame culture. Come, come to the banquet. This is, you know, the king was getting desperate.

[19 : 41] The dealers are ready. The banquet is ready. Right? But it's still empty. The tables are empty. Come. And so he sent his servants again. Because those who were originally invited, they would not come.

Right? Come. Okay. My food. All the food are ready. Best choices of food. Beef Wellington. Rib-eye steak.

Lobster soup. Come. Oysters. Right? Come. Come. What's for dinner tonight? Yeah. And, and, and, because of these people, they rejected.

The king told his servant, go. Go. Find the highways and the byways. That's actually in Luke. Go in the highways and the byways. Grab whoever who wants to come.

My tables have to be filled. My tables have to be filled. Right? So he sent his servant, tell them, invite.

[20 : 43] I have prepared my dinner. I mean, at that time there was no fridges, no freezers. The food cannot be put back into the fridges and eat the next day.

Everything has to be consumed. Everything has to be consumed. My tables have to be filled. But because of the rejection of the Jews, remember, Jesus told this parable to the Jewish leaders.

Because of their rejections, Jesus said, the invitations have been extended to others. And the Jews knew about it. So we see in the Gospels, and especially in the book of Acts, the Gospel is from Jerusalem to Samaria to Judea to the ends of the world.

And this is how God was, his invitation was actually extended to the Gentiles like you and me.

In Acts 13, 46, Paul says, Paul and Barnabas answered the Jewish people at that time. We had to speak the word to you first.

[22 : 05] But since you reject, and you don't consider yourself worthy, now we turn to the Gentiles. This is the pattern of God's salvation that is right through.

In this interim, the first coming of Jesus until the second coming of Jesus. Israel, because of their rejections, Gospel extended to the Gentiles.

But Gentiles, we still have the responsibility to preach the Gospel to the Jews. And that's why today there's many, what they call the back-to-Jerusalem movements, right?

To preach the Gospel to the Jews. And there are many organizations doing that. So, we have nothing to boast.

We cannot brag. We as Gentiles, we were not originally chosen by God. But somehow, God's mercy extended to you and me.

[23 : 09] So, we can only be having this thankful attitude and accepting, embracing God's love and salvation to us.

And lastly, the guests. In verse 3, I believe that was the first invitation. They did not want to come. In verse 5, I believe some actually were invited.

In verse 3, they said they would come. But eventually, they did not come. Right? And there are another group. In verse 6, they beat and they killed the servants.

And that really enraged the king. But there was a guy who actually responded. He came. But he had a problem too. He came by his own means.

Without a wedding clothes. Now, what is that wedding clothes? Many commentators said that wedding clothes were actually provided by the king.

[24 : 23] Because ordinary people would not have wedding clothes. Would not have a suit and a tux or a gown at home waiting to be invited.

All right? When the king invited anyone who wanted to come, he provided the wedding clothes. But what is that wedding clothes?

You and I. Do I have that wedding clothes to come to the banquet? Interesting.

I read a commentary about what is that wedding clothes? It was actually in the beginning when Genesis, when man, his wife, sinned.

And they found out they were naked. They had no clothes on. Right? And so, they tried to grab something to cover their nakedness.

[25 : 26] They used thick leaves. And obviously, you know, they wouldn't last very long. Right? So, what happened? God provided them with animal skins to cover their nakedness.

And some Bible scholars said that would signify sacrifices. Because animal skins have to come from live animals.

And the fact that you have their skins, that means they will have no lives. Right? And their lives were sacrificed. And that probably would be signifying like God was preparing a redemption for us.

Through the sacrifice of something. And in Isaiah 64 says that we try to cover ourselves with our righteous deeds, with our righteous acts.

But Isaiah said, nah, it won't work. It's like filthy rags. It won't cover anything at all. But God is willing to do that.

[26 : 52] Just like in Genesis 3. God is going to provide us with robes of righteousness. And what was that? I believe the times of Isaiah people did not know.

But we know now. Through Jesus. We are. We have the salvation. That's freely given to us. He is our robe of righteousness.

So, in Revelation 7.9. It says that we all will be wearing these white robes when Jesus returns.

That is the wedding gown. That is the robe of salvation. And also, I think in Revelation 19.8, when it says a church as the bride will be wearing this wedding gown.

So, that's the provision from God. That is the salvation of Jesus. This is why Paul says, we are saved by faith, not worth.

[28 : 07] By grace. By grace. That is God's doing. We have been saved through faith, not of ourselves. It's a gift of God.

So, I don't know about you. For those who have been in church for long enough, maybe your parents' faith. I just tacked along.

I've been tacking along for the last 14, 15 years. I had no choice. But would you consider that is your own faith? Would you accept and willing to be invited and join in to this banquet?

But the condition is, wear this wedding gown, this wedding clothes. That is the salvation of Jesus.

Not by works. I believe that guy, he thought he could go into the wedding in his own term. I don't want to wear the clothes provided by the king.

[29 : 15] It wouldn't work. When we come, we come to his presence. Not by anything that we have done. But by grace and grace alone.

Let us accept and put on this wedding clothes. Jesus has provided for us. And for those we have believed, we have put on, right?

Sure. But let us think a little bit more. What is my faith like? Is it just here?

Just accepting some facts? Or does that faith actually impact my life? I believe there is a difference.

Accepting some facts about, yeah, Jesus died on the cross. Yeah, I agree with that. But with that faith, we're actually, now, we're not saved by works, okay?

[30 : 18] Absolutely. But does that faith be able to produce works? This is like what James, the epistles of James said.

How do I know you have faith? I know if you could actually act out your faith. I cannot see. If I can see your actions that are produced by your invisible faith.

And I know you have faith. This is what James was saying. And the last verse for what Jesus said is really confirming what he was trying to say.

Many are called, but few are chosen, right? Many claim they will believe in Jesus.

But only few. Now, this chosen, I don't believe is that only God would choose certain ones. No, no, no, no, no. But at the end, how many actually can actually stay in a banquet wearing this wedding clothes and enjoy this eternal banquet?

[31 : 33] Many are called. Many grew up in church. Many responded, yes, I believe Jesus. But how many, this faith at the end actually will see us through?

So maybe something we can really, really think about today. Are we prepared? Are we anticipating this banquet?

Otherwise, Jesus said, we'll be thrown into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is precisely what Jesus wanted to save us from. Right? That's why he wanted to prepare a banquet. To save us from eternal damnation.

Are we prepared? Let's pray. Father, I just ask that, Lord, we hear this basic, this gospel messages many, many times in our lives.

[32 : 59] But, Lord, I pray, Lord, your Holy Spirit, once again, use the word. Jesus, you spoke these parables, Lord Jesus. May you use, Holy Spirit, may you use these words to impress into our hearts.

And I pray for many, Lord, who are uncertain about their faith in you.

We've been coming to church, who have been coming to church for many years, but haven't actually made a confession. I pray, Lord, you will speak to them.

pray Lord that help them to see you have prepared a wedding clothes for them may they happily accept put on this wedding clothes and join in to the banquet and Lord for us who claim that we believe in Jesus Lord Holy Spirit once again help us to remind ourselves this faith is this faith a fake just a religious kind of acceptance of facts or truly as what James has said the faith that is dynamic and that can produce works that to glorify you so help us Lord in Jesus name

Amen through the