

The Wedding Feast

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[0 : 00] We turn again, first of all, to Matthew's Gospel in chapter 22, the parable of the wedding feast.

Matthew 22, and we'll read verse 11. But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?

And he was speechless. And the king said to the attendants, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many a call, but few are chosen.

But especially the question posed by the king, How did you get in here without a wedding garment? And the man was speechless.

Wedding clothes are very special. We wouldn't dream of turning up at a wedding in our normal day-to-day clothing. I know a lady.

[1 : 14] She's related to me. And for the wedding of one of her sons, she spent, I think, 700 pounds on a hat. Now, I'm sure none of you would be so profligate.

But it was a very special occasion. And she was married to quite a, or is married to quite a well-to-do gentleman. It would be extremely rude to turn up at a wedding dressed in jeans and a jumper.

I married one of my sons about a year and a half ago. And I hired a kilt for the occasion. It was the first time I'd worn a kilt since I was about five years of age.

And, you know, all the male guests wore kilts. And it was so opportune on that particular occasion. And this is a, these two parables really speak about the same thing. It speaks about the wedding feast. The wedding feast of the Lamb. The people of God, the church gathered at the end of time and coming as a bride to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 26] We read often and we hear often in sermons and reading in the Bible about this great banquet that will take place at the end of time.

And here Matthew and again Mark are focusing upon this wedding feast, this great banquet that I hope that we will one day be present at in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this parable here, Matthew focuses on a man who turned up at this wedding banquet, but he was not wearing the appropriate wedding garments.

And so the king demanded to know how he got in without wedding garments. Well, Jesus was in Jerusalem at that particular time.

It was the last week of his ministry before he eventually went to the cross to be crucified and to pay the penalty for the sins of his people.

[3 : 31] And yet it was for that very purpose that Jesus came into the world, that he left the glory and the adulation of the heavenly host. And he came into the world becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, becoming like us in all things except that in him there was no sin.

And then he, as the sinless lamb of God, offered himself on the altar of the cross to bear upon himself the sins of you and of myself.

And that was the main focus of Christ's coming into the world. Yes, he has left us with many memorable sayings, memorable parables. He did marvelous, miraculous works, healing people, healing people who had congenital deformities even from birth, casting out evil spirits from people who were possessed.

And all these things are pictures of what it is like in heaven, the kingdom of heaven, a place of perfection and a place of joy. And where there is no sin rearing its ugly head.

And Jesus had to go to the cross. That was his main function in coming into this world. And no one greater ever trod this world.

[4 : 55] Throughout the entire history of humankind, no one greater than the Lord Jesus Christ ever trod this world. And yet he told his disciples that he had to go up to Jerusalem, that there were certain things that he had to meet with that would happen to him.

It was a necessary step in establishing the kingdom of heaven here on earth. May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven in the Lord's prayer.

And Jesus did indeed suffer much. He had to go up to Jerusalem. He said to his followers, And suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, teachers of the law, and that he must be killed.

And suffer much he did. They would spit on him. They would flog him. They would mock him. They would place a crown of thorns upon his head. They would beat him with sticks.

And then they would force him to carry a heavy cross, which made him stumble as he dragged it out of the city to the place of execution.

[6 : 04] And then they would finally impale him to it with iron nails. They would kill the author of life by hanging him on a tree. And when the religious authorities in Jerusalem demanded that he be crucified, they had in mind that passage in Deuteronomy, that cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree.

But then on the third day, just as we read in Isaiah chapter 53, having been despised and rejected, having been pierced and crushed and smitten and bruised and mutilated, having been led like a lamb to the slaughter, he would be raised to life, just as Isaiah prophesied 700 years before the event came into being.

And in being raised to life, he would see the travail of his soul. He would see the results of the suffering of his soul and were told that he would be satisfied.

He would look at a great multitude of men, women, and children, so great as John tells us in Revelation, that no one can count them. And yet Jesus knew and knows every single one of them. God the Father knows every single one of them. And Jesus suffered and died as much for the one as he did for the other.

[7 : 34] And the results of his suffering are depicted for us in these two parables, because all that Christ died for, all whose sins he bore upon himself, will at the end of time be gathered together on that great occasion, the great banquet.

And so I want us to sort of mesh, as it were, the two parables together, because they're really speaking of one and the same issue, but they're coming at it from a slightly different angle.

And long before the great day came, the wedding feast itself, the invitations went out, which means that the invited guests had time to prepare.

My younger son is getting married a year from now. The invitations haven't yet gone out, but he's given his friends and family members, you know, plenty of warning so that we can put a tick on the calendar so that we can ensure that we're not going to be doing anything else on that very special day.

And so here the invitations have gone out. The invited guests had plenty of time to prepare. And then as the day approached, he sent his servants to remind them that the day had come.

[9 : 00] And we find in Luke's gospel that they started to make all sorts of excuses. We find the excuses are mentioned also in Matthew's gospel.

They paid no attention, went off one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. But we have a little bit more detail in Luke's gospel about the type of excuses that people made, why they should not attend the wedding feast. Delay was unthinkable. Delay was unthinkable. And this was not just an ordinary wedding, if there is such a thing.

This was the king. This was the king inviting his subjects. And of course, this is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. So the king is a picture of God the Father.

And the one who is getting married is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. Delay was unthinkable. But we see in verse 3 that they refused to come.

[10 : 14] They refused to come. Or as Luke puts it in verse 18, they all alike began to make excuses. And it's interesting when you speak to people about Jesus, when you speak to them about spiritual things.

They will come up with all sorts of excuses. And that's not unique to Christianity. I worked in Muslim countries when I was younger. And we had Muslim friends.

And back then, they were young as we were young. And they had no interest in religion. And they would often say, well, when I get older and I'm sort of more mature, then I'll start going to the mosque and I'll start, you know, reading the Koran and taking religion a bit more seriously.

That was the excuses that they were making. Just as we make similar excuses in our own Christian religion.

And we read here, one man said, I have just bought a field. I must go and see it. I'm sure none of us would ever buy a field unless we had first of all seen it.

[11 : 21] If we had first of all had a look at it, you might turn up and find that the field was in a terrible state and that you had completely wasted your money.

This man asked to be excused. He saw his future, a prosperity, as it were, in a piece of ground that he had purchased.

Perhaps it was the first bit of ground he'd bought. And so he saw himself moving up the social ladder. He was now, perhaps on a small scale, a country landowner.

But David, the great king, was also a country landowner. He inherited through his grandfather Boaz fields and vineyards and olive groves.

He had inherited a very beautiful and a very fertile piece of land. And in Psalm 16 that we were singing, David declared, And when he said that, David was not thinking of the rich fields, the fields with wheat and barley, with the olive groves and the vineyards.

[12 : 35] He wasn't thinking of that. He was thinking of the Lord, whom he loved and whom he served. You have made known to me the path of life.

You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. You see, David owned things of this world as we do ourselves, but they never had a grip on him.

He never clung to them too tightly because he saw his future prosperity in the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw him in the distance. He saw him by faith and he believed all the promises that God had given to his people concerning what Christ would eventually do when he did come into this world.

And the man here was not being asked to give up his field, but to attend the king's banquet in honor of his son and heir. He could view the field later on, but for him, viewing the field was more important than attending the king's banquet.

Esau exchanged his inheritance for a mess of pottage, as it's put in the Old English of the King James, for a bowl of stew. And this man, we might say, exchanged it for a patch of dirt.

[13 : 58] I live in the Black Isle and on Sundays, on the Lord's Day, I see many farmers at work in their fields. Perhaps they see their earthly security as being more important than coming to a place of worship and ensuring that their eternal security is in place and that they are right with God.

Another man said here, I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me. Well, I'm sure any farmer who'd just bought himself a new John Deere or a massive Ferguson would want to try it out.

But he could try it out tomorrow. For this man, trying out his five yoke of oxen was more important than attending the king and turning up to honor the banquet given for the king's son.

And in an age of materialism, we can strive to get the things that we feel are essential to our happiness and to our joy. We say to ourselves, well, I'm going to buy this thing that's being advertised.

I'm going to buy this new model and that will bring me happiness. But it will never, ever bring happiness. These things will eventually wear out.

[15 : 21] They will eventually break down. We bring nothing into the world and we take nothing from it when eventually we leave. It's all a matter of priorities, isn't it?

What is more important in the long term? Pleasing God, seeking salvation which is freely offered through the Lord Jesus Christ, the free offer of the gospel or keeping up with our neighbors.

When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, these were well-to-do fishermen. There were people in their employ. They were trawler owners, we might say.

But they put down the net straight away and they followed Jesus. When I retired some years ago, we went on a cruise down to the Canary Islands and one day we were seated near a couple and she had these big rocks around her neck.

They were obviously very well-to-do and I said to my wife in Gaelic and I'm not going to repeat it because my Gaelic is very, very poor. I drew her attention to the rocks around this lady's neck and not like the rock I was showing the children, by the way, but somewhat more valuable.

[16 : 43] And we got speaking to them and they came from Peter Head. They were Christians and he was a trawler owner and I was familiar with the trawlers that he owned because I used to sail in and out of Peter Head in my oil days.

And this wasn't an old rusty bucket of a trawler. It was beautiful. It was big. It was state-of-the-art. You know, here was a couple who were very, very well off.

But here was a couple who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. And we enjoyed fellowship with them for a while. They had a trawler but they didn't let what they had in terms of this world come between them and worshipping the Lord.

And still another person here said, I've just got married so I can't come. I've just got married so I can't come. Well, God created marriage. It's a creation ordinance, isn't it?

In the very beginning, a man will leave his father and mother and take to himself a wife and the two shall become one flesh. This picture of the intimate relationship between Christ and his church.

[17 : 56] The king was not asking this man to desert his new wife. He was inviting him to the banquet. If the man had pointed out that he just got married, the king would have said, well, bring your wife by all means.

Bring her. The king would never have refused the wife coming along. And so these people had already received the invitation.

We read that back in verse 4 of chapter 22. In Matthew, again he sent other servants, saying, tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner.

My oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast. They'd already been invited and so when the day came, they were being reminded that the food was being made ready.

It would soon be on the table. Come and partake. Come and share the joy of the son at his wedding banquet. Come and share the joy of the king on that great occasion.

[19 : 07] But these people made feeble excuses. For them, the things of the world took priority over the things of eternity. And I wonder what about us?

We come to church, we hear the gospel, we're weakly urged and exhorted and encouraged to put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what sort of excuses do we come up with? Perhaps we'll say, well, on another occasion. Today is not right. We'll give it another week or I'll wait till I get old.

I'm sure we're all familiar with people who came to faith very late on in life. I remember reading about a man once from Sutherland who had emigrated to Canada and he became very prosperous. He built up a farm and then in his 90s, he went out one day and he was looking out at the farm. He was looking at the waving fields of wheat, congratulating himself on how blessed he was.

[20 : 20] but then as he was surveying the fields, the words of a Sam from his childhood came back to him. He hadn't attended church all those years in Canada but something of what he'd heard as a child came back and he was converted.

He was in his 90s. I'm sure we've all heard that and similar stories but we read in the papers every day of young people being cut down and taken away.

We cannot put salvation off to another day. Do we who are gathered here today, do we know Christ as our own personal Savior and Lord?

Do we have that assurance in our hearts that our sins are forgiven and that we are in a right relationship with God and that there is a place for us at the banquet?

Jesus says I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I shall come back to take you to be where I am. Will we be present on that great day on the banquet that we read of in these two parables?

[21 : 30] Maybe you're worried that becoming a Christian will somehow inhibit you in the things that you do. That you it might demand a certain change in your lifestyle that you're not willing to engage with.

But look at the Christians you know. Are they going around with long somber faces? Are they living from hand to mouth? Are they having to beg and borrow to make ends meet?

Are they are their lives so drab and unattractive that you don't want to be like them? Farmers may end up in debt and have to forfeit their fields.

tractors will eventually break down and end up on the scrap heap. Wives and husbands might leave and go off with somebody else.

There's only one sure thing and that is the salvation that is freely offered through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to faith then that faith will never be taken from us.

[22 : 35] It will never desert us. we will never lose Christ. In Matthew 6 do not store up for yourself treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

The devil will do absolutely everything to keep us away from coming to the Lord Jesus. Some years ago I was going into my church in Loch Gilpott and a man I know who was quite friendly with just happened to come past and he had a lady with him I hadn't seen her before and I said you know why don't you come in the service starts in about 10 minutes and he was very keen to come in but she didn't want to come in and so neither of them came in and their relationship didn't last very long and he as far as I know has not yet come to know Christ Jesus.

Many a tender heart has been moved by the gospel but for whatever reason tomorrow seemed a better day than today.

The late Mordor Campbell wrote this the candle of spiritual opportunity had gone out forever their deathbed prayers met with a closed door and a remote and silent God.

You see that's what happens when we put it off and the voice of the Lord is speaking to us and we don't want to hear it and so we keep him at arm's length and eventually the voice becomes quieter and further away until eventually we hear it no more.

[24 : 20] We'll get back to the wedding clothes. People today wear special clothes to a wedding just as they did in those days. And the king entered.

He wanted to survey the people and as he moved amongst them he saw there was a man there and he wasn't wearing wedding clothes and the king was surprised and he demanded how did you get in here without wedding clothes and the man we're told was speechless.

And so what are the appropriate garments that we can wear if we're to be accepted at the wedding feast of the lamb because that's what's spoken of here.

Well we can go through our wardrobes we can go through our cupboards and drawers and we will not find a suitable garment to wear at this particular occasion.

Isaiah writes in chapter 61 he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness. and Isaiah is speaking of the righteousness of Christ Jesus because salvation only comes from Christ and when he takes upon himself our sins your sins and my sins he gives us in exchange the pure and spotless garments of his own perfect righteousness and our own inherent righteousness in comparison is as filthy rags.

[25 : 53] Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3 all of you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ and the garments that the king was looking for that everyone at the wedding feast was wearing bar this one man they're given exclusively to those who acknowledge their sin and their need of salvation and so ton to the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross Jesus took our sin and through believing in him he gives us the garments of his righteousness and the unwelcome guest thought that he could get into heaven by his own efforts he was a respectable man he had given to charity he turned up regularly in church he was a good neighbor he was a religious man thought highly of by people in the community but when confronted too late he realized that the garment that he was dressed in was indeed but filthy rags compared to the garments that the other wedding guests were wearing and when confronted he was not simply shown the door but he was cast into outer darkness he was cast into hell he was cast into a lost eternity the ultimate destination of all who say

I did it my way I was asked a few weeks ago to take a funeral over on the black aisle it wasn't somebody who was a regular church attender and when the daughter of the deceased phoned me up I said have you thought of you know the items of praise and she said to me well I don't suppose you would want to sing I did it my way and I said no I'm sorry we don't sing that kind of things to get into heaven we must do it in God's way we must come by the way that he has provided and by that way alone and there is only one way into heaven and that is through the one who says I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me if we are not willing to come by the sun then we will like the wedding guest described here be thrown into outer darkness Amen and the Lord bless to us these thoughts of medicine