

What an Invitation!

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[0 : 00] And again Jesus spoke to them in parables saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

Again he sent other servants saying, Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast. But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.

The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good.

[1 : 08] So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 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. Then 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 are called, but few are chosen. Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words, and they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.

Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?

Show me the coin for the tax. They brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? They said, Caesar.

[2 : 26] Then he said to them, Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And when they heard it, they marveled, and they left him and went away.

May the Lord bless to us that reading of his word. Let's just bow for a moment in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, as we seek to approach your word, and we seek to explore what it says to us, give us ears to hear, hearts to understand, wills that will change in the light of it.

Be at work, Lord, through your word, by your spirit. Be at work in young hearts, older hearts. Don't allow us, we pray, to be in such close contact with sacred things, and yet left without any impact upon us.

Draw near, we ask it in Jesus. Amen. So, not many points here to follow. Okay?

So we're looking at Matthew 22, verses 1 to 10 here. And this is about the parable of the wedding feast. And there's two main points.

[3 : 46] People were invited to the feast, and basically they said, no, that's not for me. And they suffered on account of that.

And then there was a second lot of people. They were invited, and they said, yes, please. And they came. And you can imagine who this is for, can't you?

You know, there are people who hear the wonderful message of the gospel, and they say, no, not for me. They might have been brought up in a Christian home, like yourselves.

They might have been coming to church, like yourselves. But really they're saying, no, not for me. And there are others, just like yourselves.

And they're saying, yes, please. This is amazing. So these are the two main points. First of all, then, this tragic rejection of the gospel offer.

[4 : 46] Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

Notice, first of all, this wonderful offer that is made. Here the king has a son, and the son's going to be married. So an invitation goes out, says Jesus.

And this is the way the kingdom of God works. An invitation goes out to people, inviting them to a great celebration. I mean, I'm going to a wedding.

I can't, unfortunately, be at James Murray's wedding this year. I would love to have gone there. I can't be there. My niece is getting married at the end of July, and I will be there.

I'm taking that wedding. It's a great thing to get an invite to a wedding. Of course it makes you excited. Of course it does. It's a great thing, a wedding feast, and you're invited to it.

[5 : 53] And that's what it's like when you're inviting people to come to Jesus Christ. The call goes out. That's what we were saying to the children. I mean, every time you go outside, you look in the skies and the world around you, beautiful.

Who made it? God did. His hands designed it. His fingers were at work in it. It's his design. There's nothing that I see up out in the sky or out in the hills or in the waters or wherever.

There's nothing that I see that says, well, that was designed by man. It was all planned and designed by God himself. George was telling us something about that at the midweek meeting on Wednesday.

A call comes from that. When the word is preached as it is just now, God is also calling. So here, Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, he sent his servants to call those who were invited.

So think of it. The people have already been invited, haven't they? Just like I got the notice to say that my niece was going to get married and I know the date. Okay?

[7 : 10] So what do I do when I get a date like that? I put the date in the diary. Okay? So that we know it's coming. So these people, they already knew there was going to be a wedding feast for the king's son.

And obviously, they should have put that in their diary. Now, in those days, no iPhones, no real calendars to hang up on a wall, no watches to put on your hand.

So you wouldn't know perhaps exactly the time of day. I can say come at two o'clock. But what does two o'clock mean when you don't have a watch? How would you know when two o'clock was there?

So this is what the king does. He sends out messengers for two reasons. To remind them it's ready now. Come now. And the second reason is to tell them, I still want you.

I still want you. Yes, the invitation was given long ago, but I still want you there. Come, because things are ready now.

[8 : 18] And see, when Jesus sends out people with the gospel, as he does today in every country, when he sends out people, it's to tell them, things are ready now.

You can have a relationship with God now. Your sins can be forgiven. You're called to him. And it's a way of God saying, I want you.

I want you. I welcomed you. Come. Today really matters. And I want you to be there. What a beautiful invitation to receive.

when God invites us to have our sins pardoned. When God invites us to have peace with him and call him the creator of the universe, to call him father, to have access into his presence and to enjoy the holiness that he gives to us.

What a wonderful offer. Well, the king sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast. And amazingly, they would not come.

[9 : 39] They wouldn't come. They said, no. I can't understand. Can you understand that? Why on earth they wouldn't?

It's a wedding feast. It's a king's son wedding feast. This is royal stuff. This is not just inviting to a queen's garden party.

This is big stuff. It's the most amazing invitation. But they wouldn't come. Probably, earlier on, they said they were willing to come, but that's changed now.

As we read here, they would not come. Literally, it's they were not willing to come. They didn't want to be there. What do you think the king should do at that point?

He sent out the invitations. They said that they would have come. Then he sent out the messages saying, come, everything is ready. What should the king do when the people say, no, we're not going to come?

[10:48] What should God do when you said no to him for so long and you haven't responded to Jesus Christ and the offer of salvation?

What should God do to you? What do you think? You'd expect perhaps, well, you've had your chance. You've had your chance.

I was preaching last Sunday in Newcombe, and there was a lady there, and she was giving a testimony about somebody who heard her speak somewhere, and this man came up to her and says, you know what?

I know everything that you're saying. I know it's all true. All this talk about God, all this talk about heaven, about hell, about Jesus, I know it's all true.

I know there's a heaven. I know there's a hell. I know it's all true. And if I come to Jesus Christ, I will be saved. I know it's all true.

[12:00] But you know what he says? I'm not going to come. Why? Because I said no too many times. And I don't want to come now.

I actually know that I'm going to hell, and I don't care. Isn't that one of the saddest things that you could hear a human being say when they're called by God, and they're saying, I'm not coming. And I don't even care if it's true. I'm just not coming. I will never change now because I've said no to God so often that I'll never be able to come.

So I don't think that man was right. Don't think the man was right to say, I've said no too often. We'll come on to that later. But what a terrible situation.

I hope you're not going to be like that. I hope you're not young to children, older people. I hope you're not going to be saying no to God. But what would you expect God to do if you said no to him?

[13:10] You'd expect him perhaps to say, okay, they've had their chance. But no, look at what the king does. Again, he sent other servants saying, tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner.

My oxen, my fat calves have been slaughtered. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast. Isn't this king kind? Isn't this king amazingly kind that he keeps on going out, sending other servants and saying, listen, this is what I've prepared for you.

It's all done. You don't have to bring anything. You don't have to bring a dessert. You don't have to bring anything at all. Everything is there on the table. Just come.

See, I have prepared my dinner. Come to the wedding feast. Everything is ready. And you think, well, you know, these people, you'd have thought, what will they do now?

Surely they'll be embarrassed not to come. No. They paid no attention and they went off.

[14:21] One went to his farm. Another went to his business. It's as if they were more interested in their own possessions or in their own work, their own family, whatever it was, they paid no attention.

I mean, isn't that unkind? Isn't that unkind? Isn't that really unkind to the king?

To actually pay no attention and to go off and do your own thing? As if you're saying to God, you know what? I don't care about your son.

I don't care about the feast. I don't care about everything you've done through Jesus. I don't care about that at all. I like my farm.

I like my business. I'm not coming. That's bad. That's really bad. I guess it's a bit like what happened in the days of Noah.

[15:30] Remember Noah, long time building the ark, but he was preaching during that time when the ark was being built. And he was inviting people to be warned about the judgment to come.

But they just kept on eating, kept on drinking, kept on marrying, kept on being given in marriage. They just didn't care. Have you ever thought of how sad Noah was?

You may think that Noah, when he saw his sons and his sons' wives with him and his wife in the ark, maybe you thought Noah was really, really thrilled.

Noah was probably the saddest man in the world at that time because he knew that everybody would be lost outside because they didn't respond.

But it gets worse. Look what happens next. Some paid no attention. They went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them. [16:41] Now you think, isn't that ridiculous? People who have invited you to a wedding feast, a royal son's wedding feast. And what do they do?

They don't just say, I don't care. They grab a hold of the messengers, they beat them up, and then they murder them, put them to death. And you think, why are you doing that?

Why are you doing that to people who are so kind? They've gone out with a message from God himself. Why are you treating them like that? Putting them to death.

Some of us here get the Barnabas Fund newsletter, and that tells us about the amount of persecution that goes on in the world, especially in the Muslim world, perhaps, but it's also in other places, where people go out with the message of the gospel, and they literally are put to death just because they're going to tell good news, and they're still being put to death.

How many people today are suffering because they're telling the message that God sent them to tell? prophets? The longest prophet, prophetic book in the Bible is Jeremiah in terms of length.

[18:10] Okay? Jeremiah was a lonely prophet. He suffered lots. He was put into a pit and left without food and water, whether or not for a kind person.

Really hard times. Isaiah, Isaiah, Isaiah was cut in half. That's how he died, because he was a messenger from God. Cut in half.

I mean, these are terrible. What happened to Jesus? I mean, Jesus is the most lovely human being ever. Nobody kinder, nobody more gracious, nobody more loving, and you could see in the things that he did.

He went about doing good, and he preached the message of salvation, and what did they do?

Crucify him, crucify him. And you think, isn't that so bad?

The Bible speaks about those who are messengers as those who have beautiful feet. So when you hear them coming, you say, ah, that's great. There's good news coming because I can hear the feet of those who are bringing the good news of peace.

[19:23] But these folks are saying, I'm hearing them coming, and I'm going to kill them. I hope you don't treat the message of the gospel like that.

It would be awful if you did. And of course, look at the consequences. See, if you say no to God, do you think God says, doesn't bother me?

No. Look at the consequences. the king was angry. He sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. When you say no to God, that's a very serious thing.

I mean, if somebody says no to me, that upsets me. You know, if somebody rejects the gospel that I preach, of course that upsets me. I remember in Dingwall on a Sunday evening, regularly crying, longing for people to save.

That was just regular, that's normal for so many preachers of the gospel. That's saying no to the message that I preach. But in the end of the day, it's not me you're going to face.

[20:35] It's not your believing Christian mom or dad that you're going to face. It's God himself you're going to face the one you said no to.

And that's awful. He will respond with wrath. The king was angry. Of course he was. Can't you understand why he's angry?

And he sent his troops destroy those murderers and burn their city. Do you think the king enjoyed being angry?

No. But he had to do it. He had to do it. As the book of Ezekiel says, the Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

No pleasure. He'll do it. One of the other prophets says, judgment is God's strange work. It's work that has to be done and he will do it because he's God.

[21:41] but he delights in saving people. Judgment is a strange work. So, if you say no, not me, that's your choice.

That's your choice. But there are always consequences. He knows how often you've said no, how often you've been careless, indifferent, probably maybe willing to live in a life without a church, without believing parents.

You say no, not for me. And then, I love this part, then the king said to his servants, the wedding feast is ready.

Nothing's changed. The feast is still on. The son is still getting married. The royal wedding is still to happen.

The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Isn't that interesting? Look at how the king speaks about those who said no.

[22 : 58] Those who said no, not for me, they weren't worthy. worthy. I've heard many times that I've heard many people saying, I'm not worthy enough to come to Jesus.

Do you know what? You're right. You're not worthy enough to come to Jesus. If you're looking to become the right kind of person before you come. But you know what shows you're not worthy is when you say no, I'm not coming.

If you say no at the age of nine, I'm not going to become a Christian, then you're basically saying I'm not worthy. And if you say it when you're 49, it's the same.

Those who say no, what does God say? They were not worthy. They were invited, they said no, they were not worthy.

But what does the king do? He says, go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all them they found, both bad and good, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

[24 : 18] what happens here? The king sends out people to search, to invite, to gather to the feast.

And that's exactly what happens with the church of Jesus Christ. We are all sent out to search, make contact with people. Once we've made contact, invite them to the feast.

feast. And then once we've invited them, gather them in together. Go therefore to the main roads. They went out into the roads. So we have to go out into the road. We don't know who's going to meet us in these roads. We don't know who's going to be at the crossroads. We don't know who we're going to meet tomorrow.

All we know is that the king said invite everyone you meet. I'm not going to give you their names. I'm not going to give you any cards saying John Angus is invited.

[25 : 22] No, no, no. Anyone you meet, just go out into the crossroads. Just go out there to the intersection and whoever is passing by, you go to these people, says the king, find them.

Search them. Look out for them. That's my job. I'm meant to be a shepherd.

I'm meant to be a pastor. I'm meant to go out and search for people. I do it with my own family. I should be doing it more with my own circle of neighbor.

We should be doing it with people in our communities. But it's not just a pastor. It's all of us who are Christians. We have freely received.

So we go out to invite others to freely receive as well. How many people do you know? How many people do you have contact with?

[26 : 30] And of these, how many have you told about this amazing offer of salvation? How many? Can you whittle it down to two hands?

One hand? Two fingers? Your neighbor? Your family? Surely you've told them.

Isn't the king sent them out here? Go to the main roads. When you find these people, he says, invite them.

Just amazing. Invite them. You can't make them come. Of course you can't. They might slap you in the face when you tell them, I don't need this.

That's okay. But you are to invite them. Surely. When you find these people, you invite them to come. Because it really is a good thing to do to come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

[27 : 36] You'll be safe for eternity. You'll have all your sins forgiven. You're ready to die. Of course you're going to invite them. And who are you going to invite?

Notice what it says. The servants, went out into the roads, gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. Now, really?

You're not just going to call the good ones, the ones who have lived respectable lives, the kind of people you'd like to have as neighbors. You're going to call the bad ones as well?

Yeah. Bad and good. See, that's what the king wants. He doesn't say, just call the good ones. Just call the church he wants.

Just call the people who are respectable. No, he says, bad and good. Okay? So you go to the roughest areas, perhaps.

[28 : 42] I admire what people like 20 schemes are doing when they work in Nidre, when they work in Margench, when they work in places that you and I might not feel comfortable in, but they go

there and they invite people good and bad.

These people probably would never have expected such an invitation to come to them. Of course they wouldn't. they didn't know the king.

They didn't know his son very well. They didn't receive a prior invitation. They're just being met for the first time by people who are saying, see, the king sent us, his son's having a royal wedding feast, and guess what?

You are graciously, generously, sincerely invited. He wants you to come. Oh, but I'm bad.

No, no, the king said, you come. Just come. It's beautiful. And these people, how surprised, how utterly surprised they were to receive the invitation.

[30 : 01] The riffraff, the garbage, the outcasts, perhaps. But they're invited to come. So the church does the searching.

Christians do the searching. They make contacts. Christians do the inviting. You don't need a degree to invite people to come to Christ.

It's your responsibility. And then you do the gathering. Those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found.

See, they gathered them. They didn't just leave them with the invitation. No, they said, come.

Come. Let's just go together. Let's just go together to the wedding feast.

They gathered them. So they traveled together as a community so that the good and the bad who have said yes, they're among friends and they won't feel allowed.

[31 : 06] One hold. One marriage feast. One dwelling house. All together gathered. I mean, heaven will be someplace wanted.

All these different people from different parts of the world. Different cultures. People who were good, sort of. People who were very bad and yet they said yes to the gospel offer and they're there in honor of the king's son.

So the church must do the searching. The church must do the inviting and the church must do the gathering. Which of these is hardest?

To get contacts, to invite people whom you've contacted or to gather. They're all hard in their own ways.

But the one that takes the most time is not making contact or giving the invitation. It's the gathering. That takes time.

[32 : 25] That costs. And what's the result? Look at verse 10, the end. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Filled. Yep. No empty seats. None at all. Absolutely filled. It's as if you said to the king, see when I saw you putting all these seats out for the wedding feast, I thought they would be filled with all the people you'd invited.

And when these people said no, I thought, who's going to fill these seats? But the king says, I know, but I sent you out to all these other people and I knew that my wedding hall would be filled.

Do you know what? God knows just now who will be in heaven. He knows exactly who will be in heaven.

He knows precisely who will be there honouring Jesus, his son. the wedding hall will be filled, heaven will be complete, nobody for whom Jesus died will be lost, and you are invited, and you don't have to be five years of age, or eight years of age, or ten years of age, or fifteen years of age.

[34 : 06] You can't be too old. I know a lovely man, he was eighty-five when he became a Christian. I know a lovely lady who was ninety-three when she became a Christian.

Both of them lived only two years, but they died as Christians, and they went to heaven, and it's great, you see, it'll be filled.

I want you to be there. do you know of anybody that you don't want to become a Christian? No, of course not.

Do you want to become a Christian? And that's where you have to respond, because God is calling you.

So church is one place where God calls you. It's a place where we are respectful, and we listen to God's word like you're all doing today.

[35 : 12] It's brilliant. But it's God that you face. He's inviting you, and may God help you to accept that wonderful invitation.

Let us pray. Oh, our heavenly Father, how thankful we are that you persisted, that you persisted with the likes of us, that you didn't listen to our first know, but that you kept on asking, you kept on sending people to share the gospel with us, in the pulpit, at the fireside, in camps.

You are the one, Lord, who just put people in our way, who would always call us to yourself. Oh, thank you, Lord, for not giving up on us.

Please help us to go out in your name now to search for people, to invite them, to gather them in, so that we can enjoy everything you've got to give us at the feast forever.

We ask it in Jesus. Amen.