

No Grace without Honour

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Date: 01 May 2022

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[0 : 00] Let's read the Word of God now, first of all, from the book of the Revelation, chapter 19, and we'll read verses 1 to 10. Revelation 19, from the beginning to verse 10.

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just. For he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged in her the blood of his servants. Once more they cried out, Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne, saying, Amen! Hallelujah!

And from the throne came a voice, saying, Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.

[1 : 15] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and exult, and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, Write this, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, You must not do that. I am a fellow servant with you, and your brothers, who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

[2 : 32] Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus, is a spirit of prophecy. And then, in the chapter we were reading this morning, Matthew chapter 22, and we'll read verses 11 to 14.

The parable of the wedding feast. The concluding section. 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.

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.

May the Lord bless to us that reading of his own holy inspired word. This morning we were looking at the wonderful parable that Jesus gave.

[3 : 52] He was being rejected by many in his own day. The chief priests and the Pharisees, they perceived he was speaking against them. And they were ready to arrest him.

But they couldn't do it quite yet. And Jesus told this parable about the wedding feast. And in that, there is first of all, as we saw this morning, a tragic rejection of the gospel offer.

And it always is tragic whenever anybody says, no, not for me, to the gospel of God's grace.

And then we saw a hearty acceptance of the gospel offer. When the same king, the same God, ensures that the wedding hall is filled with the good and with the bad who are invited, gathered in by the servants of the king.

The wedding hall is filled with guests. And what's true of them, every single one of these guests, is that none of them said no to the invitation.

[5 : 05] And every single person who will be in heaven and in the new heavens and earth in the completed church, that would be true of every one of them.

They did not say no to the gospel of the grace of God. They indeed said a beautiful yes, a gracious yes.

yes. Now we come to this final section. You might have wished that Jesus finished the parable at verse 10.

Wouldn't it have been a lovely place to finish? But he doesn't finish it there and nor should we. And of course, this is a lesson for us about preaching the gospel, sharing the gospel.

We can't just choose which parts to preach and share. We must take the word of God in its entirety as we share this. So we come to verse 11 to 14 here.

[6 : 11] A pretended acceptance of the gospel offer. Three things you see here. Dishonor, justice, and a warning.

This person, when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. That was a mark of dishonor. He said to him, Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?

And he was speechless. The king said to the attendants, bind him hand and foot, cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

all that happens because of the justice of God. And then finally, in verse 14, you have a warning introduced by the word for.

So talking about the judgment, bind him hand and foot, 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.

[7 : 21] So that's what we want to look at tonight. Dishonor, justice and this final weighty warning. First of all, dishonor.

The king came in to look at the guests and he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. Here is somebody who had obviously been contacted by the servants of the king, invited by the servants of the king, gathered into the wedding hall by the servants of the king.

And he, it seems, alone, out of everybody else in the wedding hall, has no wedding garment. And the king comes in and notices that.

Everybody else, it seems, has a wedding garment, but this man has no wedding garment. And you can tell from the response of the king that this is quite unexpected.

Friend, he says, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? You have no place here without a wedding garment. See, the wedding garment is something that you would put on to show that you were honoring the king and his son whose wedding you were celebrating.

[8 : 45] This person, it seems, thought that he was sufficient in what he was already wearing. His own dress was enough.

You might think, well, this is a bit tough. Isn't it right that we said this morning the good and the bad were invited in and here's this man and you might think, well, he's got no clothes to put on to come to the wedding.

Surely, the king should have been more gracious and treated this man with more compassion. But that's the wrong way to look at it.

It would seem to be the case that at this time in the first century, when somebody would be invited, they would be granted clothes to wear and this man, it seems, did not put on the clothes that were granted to him to put on.

How did you get in here without a wedding garment? See, the thing is, if you were to apply this to the gospel, when God invites us by the gospel to be part of his own people so that we can honor him and give glory to him, you must remember we are never free to dishonor him.

[10 : 14] Even when we are saved by grace, we are still saved in such a way that honor and glory are given to God.

We can't say, well, he invited me even though he knew I was bad, and he can just take me as I am. I have little respect for his holiness.

I have little respect for his righteousness. I'm fine the way I am. He invited me, and I'll just take my place among all of these people despite the way that I am.

And there were many people, even in the first century, when Jesus was preaching the message of the kingdom, some of them were responding, and yet they were not changed at heart.

They were not people who felt the need to be clothed with personal holiness in any sense of the word. No change of life had taken place.

[11 : 17] They wanted to gather with the crowd, and especially in the Gospel of John, you have massive crowds following Jesus, all of them saying, I'm a believer, I'm a believer too.

And yet, what happened in John 6, they all fell away except for twelve people. All of these people were once followers of Jesus, but they all went away.

And it may be in that kind of situation that Jesus gives this kind of teaching and this kind of parable. That's why we read Revelation 19.

Do you notice what I said there about the wedding supper, the marriage supper of the Lamb? This is what they're crying out. Hallelujah! For the Lord God, the Almighty reigns.

Let's rejoice and exult and give Him the glory. Why? For the marriage supper of the Lamb has come. His bride, that's the church, people like yourselves, His bride has made herself ready.

[12:35] That's one side of it. That's one way to look at it. Everybody who comes and meets with Christ and is part of the church, when we meet Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb, every one of us will be able to say, we made ourselves ready.

His bride made herself ready. But then look at the other side. It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.

That word grant, it was gifted to her. In other words, where did the bride get the clothing, the righteousness, by which she could be accepted at the marriage supper of the Lamb, he himself gifted this to her.

It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright, pure. And what is that fine linen?

Notice, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

What is it that we must have when we meet the Lamb at the marriage supper? What is it that we must have as the bride of Jesus Christ?

[13:58] We must have righteous deeds. That must characterize us. We must have holiness of life.

That must characterize us. And that's true of every Christian, and it always has been true in the teaching of the church, that Christians, when they profess faith, they don't say, well, my sins are forgiven for time and eternity, it doesn't matter how I live now.

Oh, no, no, says God, it does matter. Who will dwell in the tent of God? And then he tells us in Psalm 15. Same in Psalm 24, and same here in this parable.

Who is it that will be accepted by God without holiness, says the writer to the Hebrews, no man, no one shall see the Lord.

Holiness really, really matters. Holiness of thought, holiness of life, holiness of will, holiness of affection, holiness really matters in such a way that it affects your life and my life, the righteous deeds of the saints.

[15:15] They will be on show when we meet the Lamb as the bride. But never for a moment think that these righteous deeds are you and you alone.

You are first of all as a Christian clothed with the righteousness of Christ. And then you begin to become more and more like Jesus Christ.

And the two things go together. The God who justifies us, declares us righteous because we are clothed with the beautiful righteousness of Christ is the God who also sets about to sanctify us but he only sanctifies us with our cooperation.

We cooperate with God in becoming more and more holy, more and more Christ like, more and more covered with the righteous deeds that should characterize the saints.

You should be thankful for the imputed righteousness of Christ. Who lived the only perfect human life? Jesus did. Only Jesus.

[16:45] Not you, certainly not me, only Jesus. His life was perfect, his deeds were perfect, his thoughts were perfect, his words were perfect, everything about him, he always did what pleases the Lord, said Jesus, and it's true.

The father could say to him at any point in his life, and definitely at his conclusion, with him I am well pleased. He couldn't say that about anyone else.

And that righteousness is what's gifted to us to wear when we go and meet the Lord. Beautiful. How thankful I am for that.

How thankful that when I meet the Lord on that final day, I will be clothed with his righteousness, not my own.

But I will also be there clothed with my righteousness. I will have the righteous deeds of the saints.

[17:56] And that's what this parable is talking about here in Matthew 22. You see, if we were to go, all these things, if we were to go to heaven without any concern for the holiness of God, it would

be a dishonor to God himself.

We must never, ever do that. So, dishonor. So, when you read here about the king seeing the man who had no wedding garment, friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?

It should challenge us to ensure that we are not dishonoring God. If you're a professing Christian, don't take any encouragement to say, well, I can live the way I please.

There's a whole generation doing that just now, in terms of sexuality, in terms of gender, in terms of pretty much every commandment of the Lord, twisting it and still saying, God will understand.

God will accept me the way I am. I am the authentic person. I am true to myself, but I'm also going to be true to God. No, the Lord will not see it that way.

[19 : 20] We need to have the wedding garment provided by the king himself. So, dishonor. Secondly, justice.

Notice the way the king dealt with this person. Notice the way he dealt with him. He comes in and he looks around at everyone in the wedding hall.

He came in to look at the guests. I mean, just imagine that. the Lord God himself looking at each one of us to see are we clothed with the righteousness of Christ?

Are we those who care for his holiness? Well, this man, he's not wearing the wedding garment. Nobody's lost in the crowd.

He notices him. And isn't it interesting the way he addresses him? friend. Friend. Friend. See that word friend?

[20 : 29] It's not your normal word for friend. It's actually a word that you find in a couple of other places. So, Matthew 20 and verse 13.

He replied to them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Remember the people who were working in the vineyard? And one of them came to challenge Jesus because he was more generous to those whom he thought he shouldn't be generous to. Friend, he says, I am doing you no wrong. That's one use. Also in Matthew 26 and verse 50, you find another use of this word friend.

Matthew 26 and verse 50, Jesus said to him, who is this? Is this Judas Iscariot? He came up to Jesus at once and said, Greetings Rabbi, and he kissed him.

Jesus said to him, Friend, do what you came to do. See, this word friend, in many ways it's used of people who appear to be friends, who appear to be friends, but they're not really friends at all.

[21 : 49] Judas appeared to be a true disciple of Jesus, but he wasn't. Friend, he says, do what you have to do. And here when the man is addressed by the king, Friend, how do you get in here without a wedding garment?

In some ways it's ironical. The man is portraying himself as one who is there to honour the king, to honour his son, and yet he's not really so at all.

And when the king addresses him, look at the response. He has absolutely nothing to say. He was speechless. And that's what confirms to me our interpretation of the parable here.

He is speechless. He could have said, you may have thought, well, I don't have the money. I don't have anything that I can wear at all. He can't say that because presumably there was a wedding garment available for him which he didn't choose to avail himself of.

He has absolutely nothing to say. But the king has something to say concerning him. bind him hand and foot. Cast him into the outer darkness and in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[23 : 17] The man is convicted. He's cast into hell, cast into darkness. This awful picture, weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness.

I've never been able to describe heaven sufficiently from scripture and I've certainly never been able to describe hell either.

But there is these three things darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth. No light, no happiness and what seems to be eternal hatred.

In the justice of God, there will be people who will be outside in the darkness forever. Depart from me, you evildoers, the wrath of God.

And the thing is, this is addressed to people who thought they had responded rightly, but hadn't taken God's holiness into account, justice.

[24 : 37] But you see, if you are a true Christian, the reality is this, you have taken God's honour into account. And when you meet with God in his absolute justice, he will look at you and admire

you because you are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and you are somebody who cares for the holiness of God.

In his justice, he will be able to justify you forever. And then finally hear the warning.

For many are called, but few are chosen. Many are called, few are chosen. That many are called fits in with what we saw earlier this morning.

Many are to be called, not few. We don't have the right in West Lothian to say, well, I'll only share the gospel with the blessed few, with the people, one or two people here or there.

Many are to be called by the church, by the servants of the king. Go out into all nations, every single nation, nowhere is to be out of bounds.

[26 : 05] Luke 24 says the same thing. repentance and forgiveness of sins must be preached in every nation. Acts chapter 1, Jesus says, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Romans 15, Paul is an older man, nearing the end of his ministry, says, I must go to Spain. Why? Presumably because many must be called there as well.

I say at chapter 55, you go out and you call as many as possible to come and drink. Many are to be called and it's a call of generosity, generosity, but every call demands a response.

response. That's what we were saying to the children and the adults this morning. Every call demands a response. many are called.

Many are called. Few are chosen. men. When Jesus was ministering the gospel in Jerusalem at that time, the vast majority of the people in the villages and the towns through which he traveled and in the capital city of Jerusalem had been called.

[27 : 46] In fact, few of them were chosen. Few of them came to faith in him. That was a fact in the first century.

We learn from the preceding half of the parable why some of them were indifferent. Some of them would prove to be very hostile. Some of them would prove to be hypocritical, just the same as in their own generation.

Even among people who are addressed with the gospel, some will be indifferent, some will be those who will be hostile, respond violently to it, try to cut out the church, and others will be hypocritical, and you'll have a new church born which doesn't care about the holiness of God.

And that sadly is a mark of many of the mainline churches currently. few are chosen.

What's the sign that somebody is chosen? The sign is not that they have been called, but that they have responded to the call.

[29 : 13] Are you a Christian tonight? how do you know that you have been elected by God? How do you know that you have been saved?

The only way you know is that you have exercised faith in Christ, love for his people, expectation in all that God will provide for you.

It's your response to the gospel that is the foundation for your assurance. He called, I responded, therefore I am chosen.

I responded with joy, I took account of the honour of God, I care for his holiness, I'm in love with his son, I love his grace, I have truly responded to the gospel, therefore I am chosen.

Paul would have expected all the Christians who are matured in their faith to be able to view themselves as the elect of God, the elect of God.

[30 : 37] God and that's true for ourselves in the 21st century as well. Many are called, at certain stages, few are chosen.

First century, clearly few were chosen. There will be times when many are called and many are chosen.

There will be days of revival. So for example, in the capital city Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, when 3,000 people were converted, you would have said many are called, many clearly have been chosen, added by the Lord to the church, 2,000 in a few days' time.

Clearly the Lord is at work. When you are the great awakening in this land and over in the U.S., when you are the great revival in Ulster, you would have said many have been called, many have been chosen.

There are times of revival when that is beautifully the case. But there are many, many, many times when the church must remember that many are called and few are chosen if you are going to mark that choice by the response to the gospel.

[32 : 05] How many would you say in West Lothian at the moment have been chosen by God for salvation? The reality is you'd have to say very few.

How many have been called? That's a much more dangerous question. And to our shame maybe we haven't called all that many. what does this say about the end though?

What does this say at the end? Will it be the case that at the end when God has finished his saving work and he's built his kingdom will there be more people lost than have been saved?

As Jesus said will he find faith on earth? The love of many will grow cold. You could quite justifiably say you know what?

I think there will be precious few who will be rescued. Precious few that will be saved. And then you have to listen to another set of texts from the Bible.

[33 : 24] I saw a multitude greater than man could number before the throne. Huge number. Many will be saved.

He shed his blood. Jesus shed his blood not for a few but for many. The human race that will be saved will be a human race that will fill a world.

It won't feel small. It will feel great. It will feel like men. Even though that at certain stages it would appear to be that no one is really responding to the gospel to show that they have been chosen.

Therefore in my view I think there are great times to come yet. I think that there will be gospel blessing on a grand scale.

I do expect revivals. I do expect gospel preaching to bring forth fruit. I do expect the kingdom of God to be built up in all the nations.

[34 : 44] I do expect that there will be people from every tribe a nation language and tongue and they will fill the wedding hall at the end. I do expect that there will be many, many, many, many, millions and millions and millions of people rescued.

There will be many, a multitude greater than man can number. but not one of them will be there who have forgotten the holiness of God.

They will be honouring him, wearing the garment that the Lord had provided for them. And I so, so want every one of you to be there.

I so want all of my own loved ones to be there at the end. At the moment if you took the measure, have they been chosen?

You would say, I have no confidence that they have. Have they been called? Yes, they have. But the end of the story is not finished yet.

[36 : 02] The king has not come in to look at the guests yet. yet there is still time.

I want you to be rescued. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to you for the gospel of your grace and awe how we ask that you would bring it home to our hearts.

We feel so weak, we feel so tired, we are weary. Lord, we are thankful that you are never weary and that the gospel work that you initiated, you began, you will bring to completion.

Bless us, Lord, we would ask, and forgive our sins for Christ's sake. Amen. Let's close now by singing to God's praise from Psalm 16.