

televangelist scandal on the news, or the Hallmark Channel, or bumper sticker, you know, slogans. [5 : 42] Like, that they would have a clear view of who God is. And some of the loudest voices on the national stage that claim to represent Christ don't.

So if you've never read the Scriptures to know who this Jesus is and whether or not he's worth following, or you have friends who are in that spot, one of the most helpful questions we can ask is simply, what have you been told that Christianity is all about?

You might be surprised. First to hear the answer, but then also how much agreement you have. Oh, if the Bible presented God like that, I wouldn't follow him. Or if the Bible taught that, I wouldn't go to church either.

Then we can just say, would you like to know what the Bible actually says? Because when you meet the real Jesus, when you see what Christianity is truly about, friends, we have the best message ever.

The only way to not be blessed is to reject it. And that's because, as this parable shows, regardless of whichever misconception people are following after, Christianity, it's not a set of instructions.

[7 : 07] It's not a test. It's not a set of standards. It's not a mindset. It's not a bar for you to clear.

Christianity is a free invitation from the King. When you accept it, when you accept it, it will bless you and it will change you.

And you will have the treasure of treasures. And that's my job as a pastor, right? Is to tell people where to find treasure. Because Christianity is a free invitation from the King.

That's what we see in verses 1 through 3. Jesus spoke to them in parables saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for a son and sent servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast.

I think the great misconception about Christianity is that it's something other than an invitation.

Some believe that Christianity is one ancient cultures kind of attempt to explain the natural world around them.

[8 : 21] They don't know about fusion. So we're going to explain the sun. There's a sun god, right? That's what keeps it burning. That idea of religion is like, we call that the god of the gaps.

God is the magic that fills in whatever you don't understand about the world yet. Others think that Christianity is a system of ethics wrapped up in a story, right?

A big version of Aesop's fables. And when you get to that ethical core, the people who kind of think of religion that way, when you get to the ethical core of each of these grand stories, the Bible, the Koran, etc., etc., really they're all the same.

They're all the same philosophy, be nice to people. That's how we get along. And they're just different stories to tell that same message. Others have seen on the news that Christianity is really just a voting block, right, in American politics.

And still others who believe, including many who dutifully sit in church pews week in and week out, that Christianity is a religious system where if you follow the rules and do those rituals enough, if you're good little boys and girls, you're on the nice list.

[9 : 47] You'll earn yourself a ticket to heaven one day. But Jesus tells us in this parable that Christianity is not a philosophy or a voting block or a system of ethics to get on God's good side.

Christianity is an invitation. And if it's an invitation, well, there are implications to that, aren't there? First, an invitation is much more than a philosophy or a system of ethics or an explanation for the world around you.

It's personal, relational. It comes from someone. Philosophies don't invite you, right?

It comes from someone, someone else, to you. So by definition, it can't be an independent, internal thing, like many Eastern religions are.

And an invitation is not a set of instructions either. It's not a standard to meet. It's an offer. So for those who conceive of Christianity as a means of putting themselves on God's good, on His good side, in His good graces, they have it backwards.

[11 : 04] He loves them. That's why He invites them. And what kind of invitation is it? Look with me at verse 4. And 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. So it is an invitation to a wedding feast.

And it's an invitation from a king. First, an invitation to a wedding banquet, right? This is extravagant. This is a royal celebration.

Most of you, probably, unless you're a vegetarian or something, two Thursdays ago, what did you eat? Turkey, right? How big was the turkey at your feast?

Probably 15, 20 pounds, maybe more, maybe a little less. How many people did that feed? How many people that feeds seconds? How many did it feed leftovers until you're sick of it?

[12:18] Right? How much larger than your turkey is a fatted calf? And how much larger is a head of cattle?

And if we're honest, how much better are they? They're bigger, they're better, and there are more of them, right? We don't know exactly how many, but he said oxen, calves, plural, right?

We're talking about a big party here, an extravagant, excellent party. So what is the invitation of Christianity?

It's an invitation to the palace. It's an invitation to an extravagant royal feast. It's an invitation to be the king's guest.

It's an invitation to specifically a wedding feast, he says, which means that it is an invitation to celebrate with him.

[13:20] A father celebrating his son, an invitation literally to enter into his joy and share it with him. The living God says, come, join me in my own joy.

Is that what most Americans think Christianity is? Is that what you think it is?

Because it's what Jesus thinks it is. There's no better party than a king's banquet for his son's wedding day.

And that's what you're invited to. You're not invited into boring, dry ritual. You're not invited into drudgery or slavery or stoic, delayed gratification.

It's not what Christianity is. You're invited to a party. To the joy of the living God. And as everybody knows, a party is only as good as, well, who's there, right?

[14:40] Well, who's there? Who offers that invitation? We said it's an invitation to a wedding banquet and it's an invitation from the king.

The king of kings. And this king, we can see just from the outset, it's a king who's delighting in his son. Which means that the god of the Bible, it's not some cosmic force or feeling.

He's not a principle. He is not the universe, as some religions would say. Like, you and I, we're not part of the divine. All of those ideas that God is a force or a principle or the universe, those are common misconceptions that your neighbors probably have.

Maybe you have. But this is a wedding feast thrown by a father for his son. The god of the Bible is eternally a father delighting in the son in the bond of their spirit.

The triune god. And that's why the Bible can say that God is love, 1 John 4, 8. Because God himself, in himself, separate from creation, entirely, by himself, is active, flowing love eternally.

[16:01] And the invitation of the gospel is to join that party, his party, to celebrate with him in his joy.

The father delighting over the son. There is no better party than a king's party, and there's no better king than this one. So if you like joy, this is where you want to be.

The scriptures teach us to say to the Lord, Psalm 16, in your presence, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Christianity is the personal invitation from the living God who is love to join his joy.

That's what Christianity is. So who gets an invite to the party? In verses 5 through 7, the original invitees don't bother.

[17:10] I've got to go check on my business. That's the scribes and the priests rejecting Jesus. And we'll come back to that in a moment. Because who the invitation is open to today, that's in verses 8 through 10.

Verse 8, Then he, that is the king, 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 good and bad.

so the wedding hall was filled with guests. What's the message here? Go far and wide and invite every soul you see, as many as you find.

Say, you, even you, are invited to the palace to join the king as he celebrates his son. Even unlikely people, even dirty people, even out-of-the-way people, even good, even bad, the question is not where are you from or what have you done.

[18 : 42] The question is will you come? Will you take him up? on the invitation? Will you join the celebration?

One counselor, thinking about this passage, wrote this. He said, if you feel at times like a spiritual street person, destitute and homeless, then you are invited.

It is the outcasts and those who come as needy children who eat at the banquet table. And what are the, what are these invitees called?

Look at verse 10. What are they called? The wedding hall was filled with guests. guests. The gospel is an invitation to the far off, to the outsider, to the unlikely one, to everyone who hears and responds to the call to be a royal guest.

Guest in God's house. at what cost? At what cost? None.

[20 : 02] Whatsoever. The king doesn't tell his servants, go to the streets and invite everyone who has a gift for me. He doesn't say, go and find the wealthy ones.

He doesn't say, go invite people who can, you know, cover the cost of their plate. He's already covered the cost. We know at the end of this week, Jesus is going to the cross to pay for the, for our entry fee.

Right? If he charged an entry fee, we could not possibly afford it. But this banquet is free because of what Christ has already done to all who will simply come.

The Bible calls that grace unearned free blessing from God. Friends, this is the best news ever.

So come. But there are two kinds of people who won't be at this banquet. I don't want you to miss out, so let's look at them.

[21 : 11] The first comes, we see in verses three through seven. At the end of verse three, we see that those who were already invited would not come.

But so gracious is our God. Verse four, 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.

But they paid no attention, verse five, 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. And so what we see here is that by ignoring God and his invitation, simply by ignoring, you miss the blessing just as much as those who mock and support him.

And he calls both those who ignore and those who resist, he calls both of them unworthy in verse eight. And now we might be asking ourselves, okay, look at verse six here, that's got to be hyperbole, right?

[22 : 39] Who would kill the messenger? And surely, verse seven, I mean, he's not going to burn their city, right? Well, friends, Christianity is the greatest invitation.

Why? Because it's an invitation from and to the greatest king, which means that by resisting or ignoring or despising the greatest king.

That's the greatest defense there is. And all, all have sinned, you and me, against this great king.

And if we reject his offer of grace and offer to come and be his guest, there is no other joy that will be left to us. So don't ignore the invitation.

Don't resist the messenger. infinite joy in Christ is offered to you, invited to the king's table. Outside his gates is only ruin.

[23 : 45] Now, at this point, as we've covered verses 1 through 10, the parable seems complete, doesn't it? It seems like he's made his point.

Christianity is an invitation, it's an invitation from the king, to all who will receive it, to come in and celebrate over the son.

And the only way to forgo his blessing is to refuse that invitation. So come, right? It seems complete. So of course, Jesus has to give us a twist anyway.

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. Then the king said to the attendant, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer

darkness.

[24 : 57] In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. What? What?

What's going on with this guy? He's at a wedding without wearing the right attire. Now, you might be thinking, I'm thinking, the guests came from the street.

These are the nobodies. They probably don't even own wedding garments, but you're inviting them from the street. They didn't have them on the way. What? How would we be expecting? No one would have had the right garments.

But this guy seems to be the only one without them. How can that be? This means that on the way in, the king, knowing that he's inviting the riffraff, the street people, the far off ones, the people who were not planning to be at a wedding today, he opened up his closets.

He brought out his tailor and clothed them in his own robes as they came in. And based on that, one writer explains, quite plainly, this man knew that he could have the right clothing, but he declined to wear it.

[26 : 29] What does that mean? What is the symbolism here? Someone came to the wedding but rejected the king's robes. Well, here's a guest, eating the food, drinking the wine, enjoying the band.

He's enjoying the benefits of the party. But he doesn't actually care about the wedding. He's not here for the sun. He's not here for the celebration.

He's here for the hors d'oeuvres. So the person who won't wear wedding clothes at a wedding isn't there for the wedding.

If he actually cared about the celebration, he'd put on the clothes of the celebration. So they might have come in. This guy might have come in looking for a good party or good food.

Might have come in looking for song and for dance. But they aren't there to celebrate the bride and the groom. They're there for themselves. In other words, this guy, he's one of the people that the servants brought in in verses 9 and 10.

[27 : 34] He had the same heart as the people in verse 5 who were disinterested. he just thought he could get some free drinks along the way.

He wasn't there to celebrate, to worship. He had other interests. You only belong at a wedding if you're there to celebrate the bride and the groom. But by his clothing, we know that this man wasn't there to celebrate.

And by his silence, we know he didn't even have anything to say to the king. there's no celebration, no worship in his heart or on his lips. He hadn't really accepted the invitation from the king.

The invitation was to come and celebrate the son. But he came to do his own thing. You will not go to heaven to do your own thing.

If you want heaven, but not to worship Jesus, you won't get heaven. Only friends of the groom who appreciate and celebrate him belong at his wedding feast.

[28 : 46] There will be no wedding crashers in heaven. You need to be there for the groom or you will not be there at all. If you're at the party to do your own thing, you won't be at the party.

But how does the king still come to him? With words of grace, still, he begins calling the man friend. He doesn't immediately condemn him, he asks him. This is conciliatory. Even now, with the insult of rejecting the royal robes, the king wants reconciliation.

He wants him to join the joy. the guest still has nothing to say. It's as if he's surprised to see the king there.

I think that's actually kind of the American version of heaven. Like, you know, like, think all dogs go to heaven and things like that. Like, there's no god there. There's no worship going on there. It's just clouds and harps and nothing.

[29 : 54] It's boring. It's as if he's surprised to even see the king, to be called to join into a celebration.

It's as if the idea of putting on the clothing of celebration, joining the actual party, leaves him speechless. And so even face to face with reconciling grace, he won't actually celebrate.

Who is this person? Why is Jesus telling us this? Who is that guy in real life? This is the person who shows up at church but doesn't truly worship.

Sure, they can sing along to the tune. They can sit through a sermon. They can go to Bible study. They can answer the questions of the Bible study. Some, I'm sure, even preach sermons.

But inside, in their heart, they aren't clothed in wedding garments. There isn't a heart of celebration for this God. They're physically at the party, but they haven't joined it.

[31 : 12] And that's what Jesus means with that concluding line, I think. Verse 14, many are called, fewer are chosen. The invitation is freely extended to the multitudes, and only those who have seen and celebrate the beauty of the groom, who have cried out to be clothed in his righteousness.

The king chooses to dwell in his house, celebrating the royal son forever. So, come, friends, join the celebration.

Maybe this is the first time you've ever realized who the king is, what his offer is. Maybe you came in here today thinking that Christianity is a bar to clear.

Well, it's not. It's an invitation to be the king's guest, to enter his joy. Come, join the banquet. Don't delay, don't reject it, don't get hostile, right?

Because there's a coming day, the day of your death, or maybe, the Lord will return sooner, the day when you won't be able to take him up on the invitation. When that day comes, there will only be two kinds of people.

[32 : 24] Those who have received the free gift, taken him up on his invitation, been reconciled to the king, clothed in his royal robes, become a guest in his house, and are celebrating his majesty and his generosity in those who are left in outer darkness.

Or maybe you're like the man in verse 11. Maybe you've walked into the banqueting hall, maybe you've been there all your life, grown up in church, but you've never actually joined in the celebration.

So in your heart you're not clothed in the garments of celebration. Know this, God searches the heart. He knows who true worshipers are, and who are not.

Just as plainly as we can see, you and I can see with our eyes who's dressed for a wedding and who is not. So if you're physically at church, but you aren't in your heart a worshiper, the king still approaches you and says, what?

Friend, will you join in? will you look at the king and his son, and will you find them worth celebrating?

[33 : 54] Because the wedding break is only for people who will celebrate the groom, who will celebrate the son. And if, as I hope, most, if not all of us, our true worshipers, are already guests at the banquet.

If you've already heard that call, the gracious invitation to come, I have good news for you. You may enter into this joy even now.

The celebration is not just for the end of time. We call it communing with God, that is, living life with God.

He's the joy, and you may have it now. Right? When you pray to him, you are communing with this God.

When you read his word, to see him, to behold him, and to hear from him, you are fellowshiping with this God.

[35 : 00] Dive into joy. when you raise your voice together with the saints of God, and praise him in his presence, you are communing with the living God.

When you receive the sacraments, every time, that is God testifying his promises to you.

Fellowship with the living God. we can enter into that same living fellowship with the king, even today.

We can join this God in his joy, even now. So friends, I call you to joy today.

Let's pray. Amen. O Lord, our God, thank you that you sent your son, the son in whom you delight into this world so that you could reconcile us to him, so that we might join the wedding feast and delight in him too.

[36 : 20] O Lord, I pray that you would open the eyes of our hearts so that we might see his glory and his beauty and the wonder of your love and the graciousness of your invitation, Lord, so that we might be those who celebrate.

Lord, for those who have not heard this before, for those who need to take the invitation, let it pray that you would draw them to yourself.

For those who have walked into the party, but have not become a worshiper, Lord, I pray that you would help them to see how wonderful you are and incline their hearts to want to worship, to put on the vestments of the celebration.

And Lord, for all who have joyfully received and accepted the invitation and come to you, Lord, will you help us to rest in that glad expectation, that hope, but also, Lord, to walk in it, even now, to live our life diving into your joy, to which you've called us in your Son, in whose name we pray.
Amen. Amen.