

The Invitation

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- [0 : 0 0] Okay, so we're going to spend a couple of minutes looking at the passage just read. And what I want to do is, it's a long passage, right? So I want to zoom in on the last parable of the wedding feast, and then right at the end sort of pull back and look at the big picture.
- So zoom in on the wedding feast and right at the end pull back and look at the big picture. So the wedding feast, it's a story that happens in three acts. It's got three different sections to it.
- And each sort of consecutive act feels, it's a bit of a surprise, because it feels like the story should end, but there's another bit to it.
- It's a bit like the Lord of the Rings Return of the King, when you think the movie's ended and there's like one more scene. You guys remember this?
- So like then Frodo's in bed and the people come in and it's like really happy. You think, oh, this is a lovely ending. But then there's the coronation and go, oh, great. I'm glad they tidied that up. And then what happens next?
- [1 : 0 3] There's, yes, the boat. That's right, the boat. And then I thought, that's it. It's done. And then we find out that Sam has kids and it's all like at that point. So it's a bit like that.
- It just, it keeps ending. So three sections. Let's go through it. So it begins with an invitation. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.
- This is a parable. Jesus is trying to make a point. And his servants deliver these invites. So one of the most important things you can know about the Christian faith is that it is essentially an invitation.
- An invitation to experience God's joy. And it's an idea that Jesus seems to constantly put before us. It's a theme in the New Testament.
- This idea of the Christian faith as this banquet, this party, this wedding that you attend. And Christ constantly puts this idea before us because we tend to feel like the Christian faith is a thou shalt not sort of affair.
- [2 : 1 0] It's a kind of a steal your freedom, rob your joy sort of belief system. And Jesus wants to refurbish our imagination on that front with stories like this.
- By saying, actually, the Christian faith, it's like being invited to this amazing party. So back to the story. So we find that this party is not just any party.
- It's a royal wedding. It's a really big deal. The king's son is getting married. This is going to be huge. You're not going to get any bigger than this in this village.
- So joyful. So special. I went to a surprise 40th birthday last year in Indiana. And I think I told you at some point last year that I was going to go to this party.
- So let me update you. So I, so there's a friend of mine in Indiana who's at Notre Dame.
- [3 : 1 3] And his wife called me up and said, surprise 40th birthday. Can you come down? I'm like, ah. And I said, we'll fly you down. Ah. You know what I mean?

So they flew me down. And they flew me down first class, which was very nice. They have a fairly well-funded life. And the party was amazing. It really was.

It was really small, but really amazing. They put up this big tent in their backyard in their ridiculous house. Everything was top shelf. The guy who sort of paid for it all was my friend's boss.

And I remember at the start when they were doing the toast, they started pouring the champers. And the guy was going, he goes, oh, yeah, I really wanted this 1979 Dom. It's called Dom Ruinart from memory.

Not Dom Perron. Dom Ruinart. Never heard of it. He goes, yeah, it's great. It's a 16th century vineyard. And I really wanted this 79 particular champagne. Turns out there's only one bottle left in the whole world.

[4 : 08] So I had it shipped over from Germany. And then they're pouring this 40-year-old Bordeaux like it's juice. And I'm texting my wife. Because I actually don't drink much, really.

And my wife's furious with me because she loves good wine. And I don't know what I'm drinking. Anyway, I'm about to leave. So two days, I stick around for a couple of days. And I'm about to leave. And my mate says to me, he takes me down to his wine cellar.

And he goes, oh, listen, there's a couple of bottles of wine left over. Do you want to take one home with you? And I looked at the bottle. It was a 2011. It was a Californian wine. And in my mind, I'm thinking, I just bought Carrion with me down there.

And I thought, if I take the wine, I'm going to have to check the bag. It's going to cost me like 30 bucks. Do I really want to do that for, like, a Californian wine, right?

And I said, just out of interest, how much is it worth? And he goes, my mate, he said, oh, probably, I mean, at a restaurant, probably about, maybe about \$1,400.

[5 : 14] And I'm like, yeah. Yeah, what do we, let's just chuck it in the bag. Chuck it in the bag. Amy would like it. Let's do this little treat for her. I had the most nervous flight home.

All that to say, there are some parties you do not want to miss, right? You do not want to miss. And this parable lays it out, like, this is a party you don't want to miss.

This is the wedding of a prince. It's a party of a lifetime. Verse 3, and he sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

This is completely bonkers. It's the first great twist of the story. They wouldn't come to the best party they would ever get invited to in their entire life.

Verse 4, Again, he sent other servants, saying, tell those who are invited. See, I've prepared my dinner, and the oxen and the fat, fatted calves have been slaughtered. It's all ready. Come to the wedding feast.

[6 : 17] This is what the Bible says. You know, the story is sort of like the king's thinking, maybe they, you know, maybe they got mixed up. Maybe they got confused about the timing. So the king sends out more servants with more details.

He goes, look, the food's on the table right now. It's really fresh. I really want you to come to this wedding. This is a very generous king.

This is an incredibly gracious king. He does all the work. He simply invites. And invites again.

God, who, this is the king, God, is so committed to this joyful feast. And he repeatedly, repeatedly invites us to enjoy it with him.

Relationship with Jesus. So, how do people respond the second time to the second round of invites? Invites. Verse 5, So, some people were indifferent.

[7 : 26] They paid no attention. Went back to their life, farm work, business life. Others were openly hostile. Murdered the servants. Killed the messenger. And how does God respond?

Well, how does the king respond in the parable? The king was angry. He sent his troops and destroyed them. Destroyed the murderers. The king responds with punishment. And this is where you think, great, that's a great story.

The story should finish there. It's a great story, right? But it keeps going. There's another part to it. Verse 8, And then the servants, He says to the servants, The wedding feast is ready.

Those invited were not where they didn't want to come. So, therefore, go to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast, as many as you can find. And they went out to the roads and gathered, just gathered people. Good, bad, just, they just gathered all the people.

So the elite were interested. Let's go and invite the proletariat. So they go out and they do that. Anyone they can find. And the reception hall is packed, it says.

[8 : 27] And, of course, you probably guessed, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the religious elite of the day. And he's saying to them, The invitation went to you. You've refused.

And so it's just going to everybody else now. The Gentiles, the tax collectors, the prostitutes. All are invited. And you think then, you think that's where the story should end. Great story, Jesus. We've got the point.

We understand what you're saying here. But then there's this extra bit, which is very interesting, this extra bit. But when the king came back to look at his guests, there's a guy there, no wedding garment.

He said, Friend, how'd you get in here without the special outfit? He was speechless. The king said, Bind him, throw him into the outer darkness, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but you are chosen.

What does that mean? That doesn't make any sense. Okay. Because you could hear that, and you could go, I really like the story up until that point, but of course this guy didn't have a wedding garment.

[9 : 31] You just dragged him off the street. But no. Folks, in verse 12, when asked why he wasn't wearing the right gear for a wedding, it said he was silent.

Now, if he had an excuse like, I couldn't afford the outfit, you were rushing me. See, that was the time to say, oh, I'm really poor. That was the time to say, but he was silent.

He had no excuse for not wearing the right outfit. And the best scholarship I've read on this stuff says that the host would actually provide the clothes. He chose not to wear the clothes the host provided.

Now, what does all this mean? Folks, what does this mean? It means this, the clothes in the parable represent the attitude this person has towards the event and to the host.

It's kind of like wearing flip-flops to a job interview. It's a complete lack of respect. This person was just presuming on the kindness of the king. Now, if we sort of map this down to real life, I think what this is like.

[10 : 36] This is like the guy in the parable is sort of like the person who's kind of cool with Jesus. Like, I'm cool with Jesus. I'm cool with Jesus. I'm totally cool with Jesus. Love his stuff. Love his things. He's cool.

I've got a t-shirt. I like him. I want to connect with Jesus. It's cool. But goes on living exactly as they want. They just do whatever they want, but they're kind of cool with Jesus.

It's presuming on the kindness of the king. Using the analogy of the parable, folks, this is a warning. It's a warning Jesus gives us here, and he's saying you don't take the invitation lightly.

In fact, the invitation should change us. The garment that everyone else was wearing at the wedding, it represented a way of life that shows that you genuinely want to be there, that you are immensely grateful to be in the presence of God.

You're delighted to be there, and it shows up in how you conduct yourself, how you live. You could say it like this, just to come at it from another sort of angle.

[11 : 46] The garments represent repentance. Now, repentance is not beating yourself up. Repentance is not trying to keep God happy so you get cool stuff.

Repentance is, well, if you think about, if you remember the parable that happened immediately before this one, the one with the landowner, you had these tenants who were looking after somebody else's vineyard, and the landowner sends the servants to collect his share of the produce, but the tenants refuse and even kill the owner's son.

It's a crazy story, but the big point is this. We are the tenants of this world, and it's a really sweet deal. It's a great deal.

But many of us are tenants who want to be owners, and we want to push the owner aside. We're talking about God. We want to push the owner aside because we want things our way. Repentance is recognizing that this is God's world, and we should live, therefore, his way to enjoy it best.

See, this guy at the wedding's got his flip-flops on. Despite the incredibly gracious and repeated invitation of the king, he just refuses to let the invite impact his life.

[13 : 06] In any way, he just prefers to be his own moral island. Okay, I'm going to finish here. We have spent most of our time looking at one parable.

Now what I want to do, just for two minutes as we finish, is step back and look at all the whole reading, which is a long reading, for a moment.

Okay, so we're zooming back now. What is the big thing Jesus has been trying to get us to understand? He's been trying to help us understand who can enter the kingdom of God.

How do we participate in the kingdom of God? How do we be part of God's family? And he answers the question in verse 32. He says, it's through belief. It's through belief in Jesus, which, using the language of the parable, it's accepting the invitation.

Now, but we learn repeatedly in these stories, not everyone is willing to believe. And why is that? Why do some people not want to believe? Why do some people not want to accept this invitation?

[14 : 16] And so I was talking to somebody this week about this, and they said, I think it's got something to do with entitlement. So I want to just look, just for 30 seconds for each parable, look at this idea of entitlement and how it relates to this as a way of sort of landing the plane, so to speak.

Okay, so in the very first verse, we have the Pharisees, and it says they interrupt a sermon. So Jesus is preaching. They interrupt and they say to Jesus, by what authority are you doing this stuff, these healings and these miracles?

As if Jesus was like a busker that needed a permit. They believed they were entitled to the kingdom of God because they were the religious elite.

They presumed to be the rightful heirs, and Jesus said an outrageous thing to them, and a true thing. He said, folks, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going to get into the kingdom before you do because of your entitlement, because you think you deserve to be there, and no one deserves the invite.

It's a gracious invite. In the next paragraph, we have these two sons. The father asks one son to work in the vineyard. He says no, but changes his mind.

[15 : 32] Then there's the other one who says yes, but does nothing. This is the person who can say the right things, but says, you know, I'm actually entitled to do whatever I want, and that robs you of Jesus.

In the next parable, the tenants, they think they are entitled to keep and treat the vineyard as their own and not pay the vineyard owner their due. They feel entitled to do that.

At the wedding feast, some of these folks get invited for the invitation of a lifetime, but they feel entitled to set their own priorities. No, I'll just go do the farm thing. I'm going to go to my business.

Yes, I'll come, but I'm entitled to wear whatever I want. And in each of these cases, grasping for power results and then a huge loss for them.

Folks, God has flung the doors wide open, and he has said, come in. Come in.

[16 : 40] We come in by believing. And that changes us. And one thing that can stop us believing, though, accepting the invitation, is entitlement.

And don't let entitlement rob you of Jesus, folks. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.