

# A Feast for Sinners

*Studies in the Parables*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 22:1-14

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## **Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church**

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Let us hear the Word of God, Matthew 22 and verse one.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.<sup>1</sup>

We will end there at that verse. We know that the Lord will add his blessing to the reading of this his own precious truth.

Now we will still ourselves again before the Lord and just take these few moments now to bow in prayer before we come to the Lord's message for today. Let's all unite our hearts before the God of heaven and let us pray that he will speak to us and bless us as we come to his Word here on this occasion. Let's all pray to that end. And we trust that the Lord will draw very near to us.

*Our gracious God and our Father, we pray that thou wilt give help this day as we come to thy Word. We pray for power, we pray for that grace that thou dost give in the time of need. Lord, breathe on this soul, breathe on every individual in this gathering. May the voice of the Lord be heard, may there be a work done for thy glory and for the praise of thy name. Hear us we ask of thee and may there be a work done among those who need*

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:1-10

*the Lord especially. We pray, oh God, that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin and will draw lost ones to Christ even this very day. Lord, hear us now and abide with us we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake and his glory. Amen.*

So we turn here to Matthew's gospel, to the chapter 22 where we read earlier in Matthew 22. We come to the next parable found in the gospel of Matthew. We have been going through the parables as a study and we return to that theme today and we come to this particular parable that we have read just a little while ago earlier in the service.

Now I have already noted with you that in Matthew there are certain parables that are not found in any of the other gospels. With respect to a number of these parables that Matthew only records, there is a very distinct emphasis on the opposition that was brought against our Lord Jesus Christ by the Jews. When our Lord was on this earth he was vehemently opposed by the Jews, especially by the Jewish religious hierarchy. And we find as we read the gospels that every section of that company of the religious hierarchy of the Jews was against the Lord Jesus Christ—the Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees, the lawyers as they are called the priests—all these prominent groups within the religious leaders of Israel strenuously opposed the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though he spoke with great authority and his ministry was verified by the miracles that he wrought throughout that time he was among men. Yet they opposed him. They resisted him every step of the way.

But that opposition only served to bring out the Lord's tremendous courage. His courage shown brightly, no more brightly than when he was being opposed and was being resisted by these evil men. And his courage was demonstrated in that he brought these parables—one of which we have before us today—which were very, very pointedly directed against the Pharisees in order to expose their wickedness, in order to so that their opposition to him was, indeed, an evil matter, in order to demonstrate that their rejection of him was going to lead to terrible consequences and this parable here is a prime example of the consequences that came upon the nation of Israel for their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in this parable we find that the judgment of the Jews for their rejection of the Lord is presented in a two fold way. First of all there was a destruction of their city and them as a nation.

Look there at verse seven. It says, "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."<sup>2</sup> This was a direct prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD when the Lord sent his armies, namely in the form of the Roman armies who came against Jerusalem, surrounded that city, destroyed that city and slew many, many of the Jews who were the inhabitants of that place. That was one form of judgment that came upon Israel for their rejection of our Lord.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:7

And then, in the second place, they were judged as well by being left in darkness and in blindness. If you look with me at verses eight to 10 he goes on to say:

The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.<sup>3</sup>

And it goes on to tell us in the parable how the servants went out and they called many to come to the marriage. And what is this in verses eight to 10? It is a prophecy of the Jews being left in blindness and the gospel going to the Gentile world. And that is exactly what happened.

As you read the book of Acts and you read on into the epistles of Paul and other New Testament writers you will find that this actually took place. It was fulfilled just as the Lord said it would be fulfilled. The Jews were left and the gospel went to the Gentiles and this was a form of judgment upon that nation for their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But while this parable in its first application that I have just outlined for you unquestionably addresses or points to the Jews, yet we must not confine your understanding of the parable to that particular matter that I have just mentioned, because this parable contains heart searching lessons for all people among whom the gospel is proclaimed and the gospel is preached. This parable is a spiritual picture that has a message for every generation and a message for every congregation such as is gathered here right now at this moment in this house before the God of heaven. Here is a parable that contains a tremendous amount of gospel truth and gospel application and gospel warning. It is of that nature. It is of that kind. It is a parable that is designed to awaken hearers of the gospel who have sat beneath its sound for whatever the period of time might have been and yet remain opposed to Christ in a certain way, remain resistant to Jesus Christ, do not come to him, do not seek him as they are bidden to do in the gospel, but remain afar off and continue going down that road of disobedience to all of the warnings that they have received. This parable deals with such people in a very clear and in a very powerful way. It is a parable that addresses the hearts of men and women and young people who are disobedient to the gospel.

Now, it is often called the parable of the marriage of the king's son simply because of the statement in verse two where it says, "A certain king...made a marriage for his son."<sup>4</sup> But the opening words of verse two make it clear that the marriage of the king's son is being employed here as a figure of speech or as a metaphor. It says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king..."<sup>5</sup> Notice the words, "the kingdom of heaven."

What is that kingdom? Well, we have noticed this over and over again. It is God's kingdom. It is that spiritual kingdom that he has set up among men into which he calls

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 22:8-9

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 22:2

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

sinner. That is a kingdom of heaven. And it is like unto—as we are told here—“a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”<sup>6</sup>

And we are being shown here very clearly in this kind of language that the king is God the Father and the Son for whom the marriage is made is his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. These thoughts are clear. They are plain.

And think about it this way. A marriage is a covenant union. And in this parable God is setting forth a great gospel truth that he has ordained that between his dear Son and lost sinners there is a covenant set up, a covenant union established into which sinners are brought and into which, as they are brought, they come to know God and they are saved and they are delivered. That is clearly taught in this parable as well as being taught throughout the Word of God everywhere. In the gospel you will find that Christ is often presented as the bridegroom and the Church is presented as the bride, that great company of sinners who throughout time are espoused to Christ, are joined to Christ and one day will be presented in glory to Jesus Christ without spot or blemish or any such thing, perfectly pure, his bride to reign with him forever.

The Bible is full of that kind of language and truth and here we have a parable that does set before us those very thoughts in a clear and powerful manner.

But may I say to you that while you have these opening words referring to a marriage being made, this parable would be better entitled, “The Wedding Feast,” because that is the dominant theme that runs right through these verses. Six times in this parable a particular word is used. Three times it is translated marriage and three times it is translated wedding. But the word in the original Greek language specifically refers to the wedding feast. And I want you to understand that immediately today. It is a parable that addresses that aspect of the Jewish marriage called the wedding feast.

The Jewish marriage had various parts to it. There was the betrothal. There was the interval between the betrothal and the bride groom going to bring his bride home to his house. And then the other aspect of the marriage was the next final part was the actual wedding feast. And the word here, as I say, that is translated marriage three times and wedding three times is the word that actually should be translated wedding feast because it is that part of the marriage, the Jewish marriage ceremony that is in view here in this parable, the wedding feast. And I want you to get a hold of that, as I say, at the very outset of our study today.

So here is the dominant theme of this parable. It is not marriage in general taking the Jewish marriage custom. But rather it is the marriage feast. And in this parable a particular issue, therefore, is brought before our minds and our attention that concerning the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ it is like a feast. It is like a banquet. The Lord has spread a feast. The Lord has set out a banquet in the gospel concerning which men are invited to come and partake. And in that wedding feast of the gospel feast there is everything that is designed to meet the need of the human heart and bring deliverance to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the human soul and to satisfy the human heart. It is all in the gospel. And that is why here the gospel is likened to a wedding feast.

Now with those thoughts I want us to move right into our study of this parable today as the Lord helps us. And the first matter I want us to consider is the arrangement of the wedding feast. It says in verse two, again, “A certain king, which made...”<sup>7</sup> I want to read it this way, “...made a [wedding feast] for his son.”<sup>8</sup>

As I have said already the words here refer to God the Father and God the Son arranging this wedding feast or this gospel feast. In other words, we are being taught here that God in his great mercy has arranged that feast for sinners for their salvation and for their eternal well being. God in his mercy has established this matter that for men in all their impoverished state of soul, all their lost condition, all of the fact that they are without hope in this world and without hope for eternity, God has established a feast of good things, a feast that will satisfy the soul and we are seeing here today it is, indeed, referred to as a wedding feast.

Now the Bible is full of this. Let me turn you back to the Old Testament for a moment or two to Isaiah chapter 61 and also Isaiah 62 where you read of language that pertains to marriage and there is the thought of the wedding in view and God uses this language to show the gospel, to show a certain feature of the gospel, that in the gospel there is everything to meet the need of the human heart and deal with sin and deliver us from our lost estate.

Isaiah 61 and here in verse 10 Isaiah says, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”<sup>9</sup> Now here is what he says. Here is why he is rejoicing. “For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”<sup>10</sup>

God here shows through Isaiah that to be saved is to be brought into a relationship with God where the Savior is the bride groom and we are the bride and there is an adorning of the sinner with these jewels and these ornaments that are pictures and are symbols of all the blessings of the gospel. God takes a man, a woman, he saves that person. And to that soul he gives his righteousness. He gives these glorious garments of salvation, the way a bride is adorned, the way a bridegroom prepares himself for his wedding day. God adorns sinners with grace and with righteousness and with all the riches of his marvellous mercy. And then he brings us into this great union with Christ.

So these verses are dealing with the wedding, with the marriage as a symbol of salvation. Note these words.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 61:10

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Then look at chapter 62 and notice the same kind of thought that runs on into chapter 62. Because in chapter 62 we have a prophecy of the New Testament age and the bringing in of the Gentiles and the very same kind of language is used.

Look at verse two. “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory.”<sup>11</sup> So he is talking here about a day when the Gentiles will come to see the righteousness of the saints and be brought in to the kingdom of God. And that is our age. That is our time, our day. God is busy bringing in the Gentiles. So that is what it is dealing with here.

But look at how the Lord puts it, verse four. “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah.”<sup>12</sup> Notice that term or that name Hephzibah. It means “my delight is in her.”

Then it goes on to say, “And thy land Beulah.”<sup>13</sup> And the name Beulah means married. “For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.”<sup>14</sup> Now listen to these words. “For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”<sup>15</sup>

Isn't this marvellous? God speaks to us about our salvation. He says it is like being married, being given these glorious garments of salvation covered with the robe of righteousness and the Lord saying, “My delight is in that person and I am married to that sinner.” That is what he is teaching here. This is true of you. If you are a child of God the day you were saved the Lord took you to himself and married himself to you and covered you with these garments and put these riches upon your soul. And he tells you today that he is delighted in you, that he is married to you.

So there is a marriage here and all that pertains to the marriage used as a symbol of being saved and what that means. But, you see, as we are noting, there has to be the feast as well. It is implied here because no Jewish marriage was every without the wedding feast as we have already indicated.

Now you go back to Isaiah 25 now and look at verse number six. It says, “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people...”<sup>16</sup> Now notice that language. This is a prophecy, again, of the New Testament era, Isaiah 25 verse six, “And in this mountain...”<sup>17</sup> That is, in Jerusalem, “shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people...”<sup>18</sup> It doesn't mean all people without exception obviously because not all people are saved, but it means all nations, all the peoples of the earth. They are in view here and it says the

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 62:2

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 62:4

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 62:5

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 25:6

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Lord will make unto all people, listen, “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”<sup>19</sup>

It is, of course, symbolic language as we would understand because salvation is not literally a feast of fat things, but symbolically and spiritually in the gospel there are all of these blessed benefits that do good to the soul. They are called a feast of fat things, a feast of wine well refined. The Lord uses terms here to indicate that in the gospel feast there is marvelous provision as he arranges that feast.

Now turn back to Matthew chapter 22 and let’s look a little farther here because you will notice what the Lord tells us here with regard to the arrangement of this feast. There is the thought of reconciliation or peace. In verse four it says “Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner...”<sup>20</sup> Now remember, brothers and sisters, this is symbolism. I want you to get a hold of that. The gospel is likened here to a dinner, to a feast. It is everywhere in the parable. And he says this. “My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto...”<sup>21</sup> Remember what it means the wedding feast.

Notice this marvelous words. “All things are ready: come unto the [wedding feast].”<sup>22</sup> But on what basis are all things ready? Through sacrifice, because verse four here says, “I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed.”<sup>23</sup>

Now the Lord here is borrowing from the Old Testament era because he speaks of animal sacrifices, obviously and what is he saying? Well, he is saying here that the only way for the gospel feast to be ready and prepared for men and to be arranged for the sinner to come is through the death of his own dear Son. The fatlings and the oxen are animals of sacrifice in the Old Testament economy. You will often read of the oxen being slaughtered and offered up to God and the fatlings. Those would be the sheep and the lambs of the flock, the fatlings, the choice part of the flock, those lambs and sheep that are, indeed, worthy to be taken and offered up to God. It is all in view here.

But, my dear friend, we are not saved through the blood of calves and goats. We are saved through the blood of the crucified one. And as God arranges a great gospel feast and prepares it for men, how is it prepared? How is it arranged? By bringing reconciliation into place between God and men through the death of his own dear Son.

As you look these words you are reminded, therefore, that the only way in which you can be in the wedding feast of God is when you are resting upon that great provision that God has made through Jesus Christ, namely in the death of his blessed Son. So there is reconciliation here because it is by the blood of the cross and by the death of Christ that peace is established.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 22:4

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

You think about a wedding feast here for a moment, just to emphasize this. A wedding day is a happy day. Today when the family come together and there is harmony, there is peace and all of those ingredients, well, at least they are there on the surface. And the Lord is showing us here that when you come to Jesus Christ you come to him and are joined to him and partake of him and enjoy the wedding feast because peace has been established, reconciliation has been established by the blood of the cross.

What I am showing you, my friend, is very, very clear. You can have no part in God's salvation unless it is through Christ and through what is found in Christ.

Now go down with me into verse 11 here just for a moment because here is a little part that I didn't read earlier, but I want to read it right now, verse 11. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment."<sup>24</sup>

And what is the idea there? Here is a man who is a gate crasher, just to use a very colloquial term, how obnoxious it would be if a wedding was arranged and somebody comes along who wasn't supposed to be there. That is what the Lord is using that idea, because that does happen sometimes. Obviously it must have happened in the Lord's experience. So he speaks of this.

You see, in the Jewish marriage culture a person could only attend who was given a wedding garment. And they weren't given that wedding garment—and I am not talking about the bride or the bride groom here. I am talking about the guests. They were given a certain garment that belonged to those who should be at the marriage. And the Lord is bringing that out here because here is a man who has no wedding garment. And what is he saying spiritually? He is saying there are people who think they belong to Christ, who profess to be part of the wedding feast, who would even want to take to themselves the benefits of the gospel and say, "I am going to heaven." But they haven't got the wedding garment. They are not in possession of that which entitles them to come in to the wedding feast.

And what will happen to them?

Well, it goes on to tell us here in these verses. It says in verse 13. "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."<sup>25</sup> He is cast out.

He has claimed to be part of the company. He has said that he belongs to this great occasion, but he doesn't belong to it for he doesn't have the one thing essential. He hasn't got a wedding garment.

Let me ask you a question right now. Do you have the righteousness of Christ? Do you have the wedding garment? Are you trusting in the Savior alone? Have you come on

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 22:11

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 22:13



God's terms to rest in his own dear Son, to receive the covering as we saw there Isaiah rejoicing in it, the robes of righteousness, the garments of salvation, the wedding garment. Do you have it? Have you fled as a sinner to Christ to trust him and to believe on him and to receive from him, therefore, that righteousness that is here called the wedding garment? Because, my friend, if you haven't fled to Christ for refuge then you don't have the wedding garment and if you continue to live that way you will die and you will go to hell and you will perish forever.

In this arrangement there is reconciliation in view. You must have a wedding garment. You must be right with God through the blood of his own dear Son.

There is also royalty in view because this wedding here in Matthew 22, this wedding feast, is made by the king. It says that, "A certain king, which made a marriage for his son."<sup>26</sup> So there is royalty in view in the arrangement of this feast. And what we are noticing here very clearly is that here is a wedding feast prepared by God, by the great king concerning which no man, no vile sinner has any reason to expect to be invited. And yet, wonder of wonders, he is invited to the great wedding feast of the king of kings. It is a wedding feast that is worthy of the king of kings to give. And yet men are invited to it. It is made by the Father for the Son. It is marked by royalty and majesty and glory and yet God says to men, "Come for all things are now ready."<sup>27</sup>

It is not the elite. It is not angels who are invited to this wedding feast. It is men, poor, guilty, vile sinners, unworthy, without any merit, without any standing of their own, without any entitlement to come. They are invited and the point is that because of the royalty that is in the arrangement of this wedding feast, it is designed to lift them and to elevate them from their poor, impoverished and vile position where they become kings unto God. Oh, how the Bible uses that very language.

In Revelation one verse five it says that, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory."<sup>28</sup>

You know the story of Mephibosheth. And what a marvelous story that is to turn back to 2 Samuel nine, because it illustrates the whole idea that I am showing you here that in this wedding feast there is royalty. The arrangement of it is marked by a royal decree and by a royal culture. And yet into it men are brought and the whole idea is that we are lifted from our ordinary sinful situation in life to become the kings, spiritual kings unto God. And here is Mephibosheth.

And notice what happened to Mephibosheth, 2 Samuel nine verse 11. And it says at the end of that verse, "As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons."<sup>29</sup> And you notice the language, "...as one of the king's sons."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Matthew 22:4

<sup>27</sup> Luke 14:17

<sup>28</sup> Revelation 1:5-6

<sup>29</sup> 2 Samuel 9:11

Mephibosheth is brought into David's house and into David's family. He is given a position that he didn't deserve, a position to which he had no entitlement, but he is brought in and he is made one of the king's sons.

And, you know, Mephibosheth obviously could never forget that. Turn to chapter 19 and look at verse 28. And here is Mephibosheth speaking later on and he says this. "For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table."<sup>31</sup>

He couldn't forget this. He was filled with amazement for the rest of his days. He was but a dead man like the rest of his family. And yet David in mercy and in covenant grace reached out to Mephibosheth, brought him in, set him at his table as one of the king's sons. And then in chapter 21 verse seven of 2 Samuel you see it once more. And notice the marvelous words that are there. "But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath [or covenant] that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul."<sup>32</sup>

Why was Mephibosheth dealt with so graciously and so mercifully? Because of this covenant between Jonathan and David, a picture of the covenant of grace between God and men. And Mephibosheth is filled with wonder and amazement that he would be brought in to the king's house, that he would be set down at the king's table and that he would be fed with the king's dainties and all that was on that table. And he remembered he was but a dead man. He deserved it not. He was an outcast. He was a member of a rebellious family, this man Mephibosheth. His grandfather Saul was a rebel and was a man who sought to slay the appointed king. And yet to that poor individual, Mephibosheth, the Lord in his mercy moved David to bring him in and he sat at the king's table.

Do you realize today as a Christian that you are at the king's table in the spiritual sense?

I want you to go now to John chapter 12 because here we have in so many words what you see of Mephibosheth. The same idea, but here it is Christ who is the anointed one. It is not King David. It is a mere man. It is the Lord.

So John chapter 12, let's look at these verses here by the Lord's help. Verse three, first of all. "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> 2 Samuel 19:28

<sup>32</sup> 2 Samuel 21:7

<sup>33</sup> John 12:3

The anointed one here is Jesus Christ. Here we have the king. He is sitting in the midst of his people. He is anointed by his people. What do we find? Well, let's back up, then, to verses one and two.

“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was.”<sup>34</sup> Now listen. “...which had been dead.”<sup>35</sup> Do you notice the similarity between him and Mephibosheth? Mephibosheth said, “I was but a dead man,” and here it says of Lazarus, “he had been dead.” Then it says, “...whom he raised from the dead.”<sup>36</sup> Then it says, “There they made him a supper; and Martha served: [listen] but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.”<sup>37</sup>

He sat at the table with the king, the anointed one that day. He had been dead. He had been resurrected and he is given a new position. He is sitting with the king and he is enjoying the food that is provided for the king. He is given a share. He is given a place at the table and he partakes of what is there in that table. In all of that you can see so wonderfully the gospel and a parallel with our parable and with all that we are looking at right here.

What are you? I said a while ago you are seated at the table of the king.

You see, sinner, or believer rather, you were dead. You were dead in your sins. You were lost. You were an outcast. But then you were brought in, brought back from the deadness of your sin, made alive unto God, made a new creature and given eternal life. But more than that you have been placed with the king at his table and today you are in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and all that is in Christ and all that is in the gospel is yours and is given to you by the Lord Jesus for your good, for your well being, for your own eternal satisfaction. There is royalty here in this arrangement.

Imagine this today afresh, dear child of God, that you should be seated with Christ in heavenly places enjoying all the blessings of the gospel.

And go back to Matthew 22 therefore and notice that in the arrangement of this feast there is richness. You see, a royal wedding is, undoubtedly, a rich affair, nothing paltry, nothing lacking about that kind of a wedding. And we see it coming out here because, again, those marvellous words in verse four. “All things are ready.”<sup>38</sup> That is the provision. There is the richness of this feast that is arranged by the king for his Son, a rich provision and a reminder, therefore, of the richness that there is in the gospel feast.

What it says is this. There is not a need that you have as a sinner that cannot be made in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>34</sup> John 12:1

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> John 12:2

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 22:4

“All things are ready.”<sup>39</sup>

What do you need as a sinner? You need forgiveness. You need cleansing. You need to be justified. You need to be washed from your defilement and your uncleanness before God. And in this gospel feast everything is ready, there are all the gospel promises. There are the great gospel riches. There is access to the throne of grace. The Holy Spirit is promised. Everything that you need to save you and deliver you and take you to heaven, it is all found in the gospel feast. It is a feast arranged by God that is marked by richness. The arrangement of this feast.

But then there is the announcement of it. Quickly look with me at verse three, the announcement of the wedding feast. It says in verse three, “And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”<sup>40</sup> But notice those words, “[He] sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding.”<sup>41</sup> Here is the announcement of the wedding feast. The word went out. There is a wedding feast and you are invited. That is really what was taking place as the Lord gives us this parable.

What is he saying therefore? He is telling us that not only is there the arrangement of the gospel in all the terms that I have shown you, but then it is to be announced, it is to be preached. The message is to go out to sinners that all is ready, now come.

In that there is a general invitation. It is a very interesting line of thought that runs through this parable. In verses three and four and eight and nine you will find the word “bidden.” For example, there in verse three. “Call them that were bidden.”<sup>42</sup> Verse four. “Tell them which are bidden.”<sup>43</sup>

And you will find the word again down in verse eight and also in verse nine, this word “bidden.”

That word means invited. What happens when a wedding is arranged? How is the announcement made? Aren't invitations sent out? Here is the very same thought, that very thought right here in this parable. People were invited to this wedding feast. And the very nerve and heart of that invitation is, again, in those words at the end of verse four, “Come unto the [wedding feast].”<sup>44</sup> It that not an invitation? It clearly is.

And let me say to you in this gathering today who are yet unsaved and unconverted, this invitation is presented to you. You see, notice something very important in this parable about this matter of the invitation. I have shown you how the word “bidden” is used here four times. It means invitation.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 22:3

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 22:4

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

And some people will say, “But that was only for those who actually came.” And out of that they will draw their conclusion that the invitation of the gospel only goes out to the elect.

No.

Because many of those who were invited in this parable never came. They never came. But they were invited. The invitation of the gospel, my friend, to come to Jesus Christ is announced as a general call to men to come to the Savior. And it is not my business or any other preacher’s business to stand on the pulpit and restrict it. And I want you to get a hold of that. This parable tells me that I am to invite you and I am to plead with you to come to the wedding feast.

And I can say to you today, therefore, unsaved person, that you are to come to Jesus Christ.

You might say, “Well, what right do I have to come to this Savior?”

You might say to me today, “Does the Lord mean that? That he is telling me to come to Christ? And what right do I have to come to Christ?”

Well, let me turn you to where we read earlier today, Revelation 22 and look with me at verse 17. Here is an announcement. Here is an invitation. Now notice what it says. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”<sup>45</sup>

Notice that the answer to your question—What right do I have to come to Jesus Christ—is this: The right for you to come to Christ is contained in the invitation. You don’t need any other right. God is not going to come down to you today and put his finger on you and say to you personally in this meeting as if you were different from other people. Know in this general call you are being addressed and you are being told that your right to come to Jesus Christ is contained within the very invitation itself. It is there. You hear the gospel preached. You hear of your sin. You hear of your need. You hear that you will perish.

You say to yourself, “Is there a place for me? May I come to Christ? May I seek the Lord? Do I have the right to come?”

And I am showing you from this parable. Yes, you do.

The Lord is showing you very, very clearly that his gospel call goes out to you as you sit there in that seat without Christ and all your desperate need. And he is inviting you to come to the wedding feast.

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<sup>45</sup> Revelation 22:17

It is not only a general invitation, but notice with me it is also a generous reiteration because in verse four you will notice something very important. It says there, "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden."<sup>46</sup>

These same people as in verse three, those who were bidden in verse three are now given a fresh invitation. It is reiterated or repeated by the servants of the king. He tells them, "Go out again. Tell them once more that they are to come to the wedding feast."

My dear friend, the Lord is showing us here this marvelous truth that he sends out the gospel invitation to men. And in that gospel invitation he tells them, "Come to me." And the very invitation says to your heart, "You have a right to come to me." But he also sends it out again and again and again.

There are folk in this church building now to whom the invitation has been repeated, reiterated, presented, over and over again. Isn't that right? You have heard of your sin. You have been made acquainted with your guilt. You have been shown the consequences. You will perish. And the Lord has said to you through his Word, through this invitation reiterated over and over again. "Come to me. Come to the wedding feast. Seek my favor. Seek my grace."

The Lord is stressing in all this your responsibility, your accountability as a guilty sinner to obey the gospel, to come to Christ. He is stressing that you are not to be treated passively as if you weren't guilty of your sin, your own sin.

No I must never treat you that way. I must always tell you from this pulpit that your sin is your own and the hell to which you are going at this very moment you are digging for yourself. And the torments that await you, you are preparing for yourself. And the wrath that will one day encompass you if you die in your sin, you are laying up for yourself because God addresses you in a parable like this as a responsible, accountable, guilty sinner. And yet he says to you, "Come. Come to my wedding feast. Come to the rich provision. Come and partake."

He is saying that to you today. These are the words of our God, the great king. In all that he has prepared for Christ and those who will come to Christ. He is saying this to your heart today.

And, my friend, consider very, very carefully the latter part of this parable as we draw toward a close. And what we notice here is the attitude now to the wedding feast. Look with me at verse three and you will find that there and also later on in the parable the attitude displayed to the wedding feast is spelled out very clearly.

First of all it is an attitude of refusal. It says in verse three. "And they would not come."<sup>47</sup> Now what is God telling us there? He is telling us that when men are presented with

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<sup>46</sup> Matthew 22:4

<sup>47</sup> Matthew 22:3

Christ and the gospel and all that the gospel does for the sinner, they refuse. They say, “We will not come.”

Do you notice what it says? “And they would not come.”<sup>48</sup>

It is a matter of their will. They hardened their hearts. They set their will against the Lord. They refused. They would not come.

But I have got to tell you that you are charged with that. It is your own sin, the sin of refusing Christ arising out of your heart, flows out of your soul. You are guilty of that refusal.

I tell you right now for that refusal you will surely perish. That is what the Lord Jesus Christ said on another occasion to the Pharisees in John five verse 40. “And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”<sup>49</sup>

That verse means what it says. “Ye will not, ye refuse. You set your will against me, against the gospel, against all that is in me, all that is for sinners. You set your will against it.”

And that is what you have been doing also, setting your will up against the Lord and against his Word and against the gospel invitation. And the appeals to your heart and the pleas to flee from the wrath to come.

And you have said over and over again, “I will not come to Christ. I will go my own way. I will continue in my sin. I will take that road that suits me and pleases me.”

But, you see, God holds you accountable, therefore, for that. So it is attitude of refusal, an attitude, then, of repudiation. Look at verse five. “But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”<sup>50</sup>

They made light of it. That is repudiation, isn't it? In fact, the word there that is translated “They made light of it,” is the same word as neglect.

You know Paul's great statement in Hebrews two verse three? “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”<sup>51</sup>

So it could be read, “How shall ye escape if ye make light of so great salvation?”

And many here today have made light of the salvation of God by going their own ways. That is what it says. They made light of it and went their own ways.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> John 5:40

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 22:5

<sup>51</sup> Hebrews 2:3

The point is this. You don't have to stand up and shout out against the preacher or take him aside and say, "I don't believe that and that is nonsense," and so on. You don't have to do those things to be one who makes light of the gospel. All you have to do is go your own way, the way of sin, the way of the world, the way of the flesh, satisfying yourself and pleasing yourself. As you do all that you are making light of the gospel because you are saying that those things that you pursue are of more value than the Lord Jesus.

Notice how it goes here. "But they made light of it, and went their ways."<sup>52</sup> And to what did they go? "One to his farm, another to his merchandise."<sup>53</sup>

What are they saying? They are saying that their farm and their merchandise, their business and their work and those things that they love are of more value than the wedding feast, more value than the king's son. And there is where their repudiation of the gospel really arises. When sinners have this attitude the things of the world, the things of time are more precious and more valuable than Jesus Christ or of greater worth than him.

Oh, my friend, what a terrible, what an awful sin that is to say that the things of the world are of more value than Christ. That is exactly what you have been saying because you have refused the gospel. You said, "I will not come." And you have repudiated the gospel. You said, "It is not worthy of my attention. I will give myself to the world."

And it was also an attitude of rebellion, verse six. "And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them."<sup>54</sup>

There is man's rebellious heart against the gospel. And what a summary we have, therefore, of the attitude of man toward the Savior and I summed it for you. But what was the result? I mentioned it in my opening remarks. I come right back to it.

What does the Lord show you here as we come to an end today in this study? What will happen to people who have this attitude? Because, my dear friend, you can't have this attitude and get away with it. You can't refuse Christ, repudiate Christ and rebel against Christ and not pay for it.

What is going to happen to you for this sin? Well, the parable tells us. First of all the day will come when you will be passed by. Remember I showed you in the opening introductory remarks the Jewish nation was passed by and the Lord turned to the Gentiles. But that happens not only to a nation like the Jews as it did happen in 70 AD, it happens to individuals as well. God passes people by eventually and leads them to the consequence of their sin. The Bible is full of that.

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<sup>52</sup> Matthew 22:5

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Matthew 22:6



And yet it underlines very clearly man's responsibility, man's accountability. It underlines what I said in my question: Do you think you can refuse Christ and reudiate Christa and rebel against Christ and not pay for it? No, my friend, you will not escape the consequences.

And then, you see, the other thought was the city was destroyed. It is very clear. You take this attitude toward Christ and the gospel, not only will you be left to the consequences of your sin, but you will experience. God not only will pass you by, but God will bring you down to everlasting ruin, down to utter and eternal misery and in hell forever you will taste of his indignation, his wrath and his judgment that you are currently laying up for yourself.

This is how God addresses sinners. This is how this parable addresses our hearts today. Therefore, dear sinner, hearken to the Lord. As you sit there in your seat right now may your heart rise up with a cry to God for mercy that he would save your soul, that he would deliver you from your sin? And when that cry goes up the Lord will answer. The Lord will save.

Let us bow in prayer. Let's all unite our hearts here in these closing moments and we will just end our meeting now with prayer and I pray today that God will speak and God will work by his Word and through his own truth.

*Father in heaven, we earnestly pray today that thou wilt draw near and that wilt bless this truth of thine. And, oh God and Father, we ask that today sinners would be awakened and would be brought to that sense of their sin and their need of Christ. Oh Lord, we have set before men today again all that there is in the Lord, all that there is offered to the ungodly. And yet, Lord, I pray that thou wilt use thy Word to bring about that call to the heart. Lord, men are responsible. They are accountable. And yet, Lord, no man will ever seek thee until you draw. And may, through the general call, the particular call be heard and through the warning note may sinners flee from the wrath to come.*

*Bless us we pray. Meet with us throughout this day. Get great glory to your name and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit be with every believer today and then forever for Christ's sake. Amen.*