

Matt. 22:1-14 21st Sunday after Pentecost October 24, 1993

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ 5But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ 10Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. 13Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The day is done. I make the tour of the house, turning off the lights, locking and checking the doors. I glance at the stereo, making sure the power is off.

Time for sleep.

I close my eyes, safe, secure, at peace.

When suddenly there is a crash. Something has fallen.

Is an intruder in the house? Is our safety an illusion?

I turn on lights as I go to search. Are my children safe? Am I?

Then next to the window I spy the culprit. A light catcher has fallen, the suction cup that bore its weight has lost its grip. I give it a lick, stick it back in place. I prepare the house and myself for sleep once more.

If only the sound that disturbs my rest this morning were so easily put aside.

At first as we hear Jesus' parable I feel secure. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.

This story must be about Jesus, I think, God, the king, giving a banquet for his son.

“He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves saying, "Tell those who have been invited: ‘Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is

ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.”

And this must be the people of Jesus day who rejected him, crucified him, and persecuted his followers.

“The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.”

Was not Jerusalem destroyed in 70 A.D.? Those who rejected Jesus God rejected. Yes, everything is falling into place.

“Then the king said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all who they found, both good and bad; so that the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

That's us. We weren't the first invited but we received the invitation and we have come to the wedding feast of the son. God has opened the doors and we entered. We feast, taking part in the celebration that shall be ours forever.

What a warm and cozy and wonderful story for us. We said yes to God's invitation, yes, to Jesus.

And just when I feel safe, I hear the sound that sets me on edge.

One of us is being bound and thrown out.

“What happened?” I ask. This is the story I hear.

“The king came in to see the guests. He noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe. He said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’”

What's going on here? What's a wedding garment? Do I have one on? Will the king come to me next?

“Lynn, where is your wedding garment? You have been sharing the feast. But where is the love for the poor that I feed you to give? You know my word, ‘When I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me drink, when I was naked you clothed me, when I

was sick or in prison you visited me. As you did it to the little ones, you did it to me.' Why aren't you dressed in deeds of loving and giving and serving?"

What would I say? "Lord, you know how I was saving up for my retirement, and for a new car. I was busy with watching old movies on TV and Browns games. I was worn out by worrying about myself and my own family and had no energy to give to your little ones?"

What could any of us say? "Lord, we were so busy trying to make a nice church that we didn't have time to go beyond ourselves. We needed the money for us, for our wants that we had nothing left for other's needs."

"Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?"

Will I be speechless, will we? Is our own selfishness, self-centeredness the intruder that is robbing us, threatening us?

In the letter to the Colossians we hear these words: "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience." We are God's chosen ones, invited to the wedding banquet, given a seat of honor through all that Christ has done.

"Now let us clothe ourselves with compassion."

Or as the Bible School song tells it: "Put on love, every day, never hide your love away. Don't save love for a special day but put on love every day."

Love, the wedding robe for you. Amen.

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