Proper 23A 2020 The Wedding Feast is ready: Come all Ye Chosen Ones!

Matthew 22: 1 – 14

Oh the joy of a wedding! Celebrate the love of husband and wife. Marital vows of faithfulness spoken in God’s presence. Joy of the reception and a magnificent meal to be enjoyed. What happy times!

All that joy gets turned up a notch or two for royal weddings. Many tuned in for the royal wedding of Harry and Meghan, Duke and Duchess of Sussex in 2018. What a celebration with such splendour that even Cinderella would blush! Not many weddings can top the pageantry of Britain’s royal ceremonies and traditions.

Many could watch it but only a few were invited by name to the royal reception. Wouldn’t you feel very privileged if you received such a wedding invitation in the mail? I’m sure all your friends would know about it. To be included in such inner circles of royalty is rare indeed!

Blessed are those invited to the wedding feast of the King’s Son

Jesus tells a story of a wedding feast for the Son of a King, a Prince. How blessed are those guests. The King said that the feast of choice meat was ready. One can only imagine all the rest that goes with it. Exquisite side dishes, fine aged wine, tasteful music and laughter in the surroundings of a royal palace. Who would not want to be there?

Sadly, not one of the invited guests came. That is shocking. Not one guest! Who would ditch such a royal wedding feast? What could possibly be more important? Jesus goes on to answer that. He said those ungrateful guests chose to ignore it by preferring to go to work in their fields or at their business. It all sounds so unbelievable!

And then it gets worse. The guests back then did not have internet or even mail delivery. Kings would send ambassadors in their name with hand-written invitations and a royal seal on the envelope. These would be personally delivered. Jesus said that the rest of the invited guests who did not prefer their jobs, actually beat up the king’s messengers and killed them.

What would the king do to them when he found out? Of course he would be angry! Wouldn't you? When the king’s invitation was spurned and his royal messengers were murdered, his wrath was kindled. His royal joy turned to vengeance. The king brings in his army. He is the commander-in-chief who sends his soldiers to first put those ungrateful murderers to death, but also to burn their entire cities to the ground. Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes. Instant death.

Cursed are those who neglect it.

It should come as no surprise that the murderous guests and their cities were destroyed. It is a fitting and just response for such ingratitude. Their penalty is severe but deserved.

Who are these invited guests? Who are all the characters in this parable? It’s easy to see the King as God the Father, and the Prince as Jesus, the Son of God. The invited guests are the Jews, the people of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham. The king’s servants sent out with the wedding invitation are the prophets of God, who were stoned in capital city, Jerusalem.

The Jewish rejection of God’s Son opened the way for Gentiles to be invited to the wedding feast. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*

Since the King’s joy remained full and undiminished over the wedding of His Son, he sends out his servants to invite others to the feast. These are the Gentiles. When St. Paul witnessed the Jewish rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, he directed his missionary efforts to the Gentiles exclusively. He says in Acts 13:46: *Since your thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we [Paul and Barnabas] are turning to the Gentiles.*

The point of the parable is far more than the Jewish/Gentile members of the church. Go back and recall all the blessings of being invited to God’s wedding feast. To sit at God’s table and eat with Jesus as His royal bride is an eternal Thanksgiving meal that is the Holy Communion. “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev. 17:9)

Who are the worthy guests?

Who are the ones who can come to Holy Communion? Surely not because they are Gentile! Or because of what they have done and said. The question of worthiness is not found within us. For we too have not fulfilled all of God’s intentions in his holy law. How easy it is to come with excuses to skip church and miss the Lord’s Supper? How rudely we have treated God’s written invitation, the Holy Scriptures by ignoring them, or thinking it too hard to understand, as irrelevant, or not as important as our busy schedules of work and pleasure?

Despising the bible and failing to make each day holy by reading and holding God’s invitation to be with Him as the most important thing in life, has left us all unworthy. Then there was a guest who refused to wear the wedding clothes and snuck in to the wedding hall. This wedding crasher had no excuse when the king asked him how he got in.

What hope is there if God judges according to His law? What is your answer when God asks why he should welcome you into heaven?

If the answer cannot come from within us, it must rest in Jesus. He alone makes you worthy by what he has done. He gives you his good name and reputation as he took away your old soiled clothes of original sin and actual sin and gave you cloak of holiness and righteousness to put on.

What great comfort for poor and lowly sinners when the King of heaven judges them by the sweetness of His mercy found in His royal Son, who wore his crown of thorns, a purple robe that was ridiculed by Roman soldiers, was nailed to his throne of the cross, and begs to His father for our forgiveness.

Coming from a long line of Christians or Lutherans never guarantees anyone a place in God’s kingdom. Nor does a good reputation or many good deeds. Though we in no way deserve mercy, God still reaches out and invites us to come and sit down with Him at His royal table and enjoy his heavenly banquet. God prepares a table of feasting and invites you to come!