

## **God's Great Banquet**

Matthew 22:1-14

My name is Humayun Sunil. I am an Assistant Chaplain at St. Mary's Rotterdam. I was born and raised in Pakistan and moved to the Netherlands in 2002. Since then, I have worked on different missional projects in Rotterdam. At the moment, I am working in Diocese in Europe as a priest and assisting Rotterdam's Chaplaincy.

It is my honor to be with you this morning. Firstly, I thank God, who allows me to share His Word with His people in Eindhoven. This is His call; it is His works. We all are His humble servants. Secondly, I thank my brother Francis who graciously invited me to see the wonders of the Lord's hands in Eindhoven. And I am delighted to be here this morning.

These are extraordinary times; wherever you look, you see frightened people, unsure of what is going on; new policies are being made and redefined every week. Our governments are also not sure, working under-pressure, seeking every possibility to ensure the best for their people.

And in all this ambiguity, we have to look and wait for hope. The hope this world offers looks fake and is decayed away. Today's passage has hope for all of us – those in the Church and those still not in the Church. Hope is found in the promises God has given us. No matter what trials, temptations, or pain we may suffer, we can always hold onto the hope God extends to us.

### **Introduction**

This parable consists of two sections, verses 3-7 and verses 8-13. Each begins with the king sending out his servants to invite guests to the wedding celebration. The first invitation is unsuccessful, but the second invitation is successful. However, each ends with a catastrophe. In the first section, catastrophe befalls on all who were invited; in the second section, catastrophe befalls only on a single person. This parable is also mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (14:15-24) as well. But in Luke's story, there is no killing of the servants, nor the king's aggression toward its subject and destruction of the city is mentioned, and there is no throwing off a single man to the darkness who does not dress appropriately.

### **King and the Wedding (v. 1-2)**

This parable is introduced as a standard parable formula concerning the kingdom of heaven. This is not the only parable that speaks about the kingdom of heaven, and there are significant similarities in those parables.

### **The Context (v. 3-4)**

This event was completely in accordance with Jewish customs. As is customary with prominent persons, the king sends out his servants to summon the guests whom he had earlier invited.

This parable is a picture of a Jewish wedding. When the invitations to this great feast were sent out, the time was not mentioned. And when everything was ready, the servants were sent out again with a final summons to tell the guest now is the time come and join the celebration.

### **For Own Best (v.5-6)**

For the social significance, the king honors the guests with invitations, but the guests' refusal is an insult to the king's dignity.

In these verses, there are two sets of people. The first one goes to their own business means they don't just care about the invitation.

The second group of people is violent; the stakes are raised, servants are subjected to violence and death. This way, they disrespected the king with an act of violence. This was a loud rejection of the invitation.

### **The Repercussion (v.7)**

The servants' treatment in v. 6 was already disproportionate to the story situation; now, the king's response to this act of defiance seems to take us right outside the wedding context, a full military campaign that destroyed the murderers and their city.

### **The Wave of New Invitation (v. 8-10)**

After the murder of the earlier servants (v. 6), a new group of servants is now sent out. (V10). The former invitees have proved not to be worthy of the invitation. They are replaced by others but still from the king's own city; interestingly, they are not described as foreigners and so probably intended to represent the ordinary people and the despised within his kingdom.

These replacement guests are less worthy, but, for all their lack of natural advantages, they are willing to come in. The deliberately indiscriminate nature of this second wave of invitations reflects the open offer to join the celebration. All are welcome "the bad as well as good."

### **The Coming of the King (v. 11-13)**

This final scene of this story is the coming of the king. This entry of the king does not require an allegorical significance, but the clear element of judgment. The king himself joins the guests. As is appropriate for a prominent host, he appears only after all the guests are arrived. However, he comes not to participate in the wedding banquet himself but to look at the guests who are reclining at the table.

Jesus told us the kingdom rule; that when the real guests not arrived, the king sent the invitation to the highways and byways to gather all men in. The king has open the door of its palace and banquet that everyone can be part of it. This is how the gentiles and the sinners would be invited in.

### **What, then, was Christ seeking to teach?**

A man cannot go on living the life he lived before he met Jesus Christ. He must be clothed in a new purity and new holiness and new goodness. The door is open, but the door is not open for the sinner to come and remain a sinner, but for the sinner to come and become a saint.

Another aspect is that if we visit a friend's house, we do not show up in dirty clothes. We know it is not the clothes which matter to the friend; it is not the show we stage with our clothes. It is simply a matter of respect that we should present ourselves in our friend's house as neatly as we can.

**Few are Chosen** (v.14)

The final verse brings together the entire parable. For Israel and the Gentile church, it is the case that all are invited, but only a few will be saved. Today, you and I are from that group who received the second wave of the invitation; we belong to the highways and byways. We were bad as well as good, invited to be part of a great banquet.

This story also symbolizes the state of salvation, from which some will be excluded permanently. And some will be invited to replace it.

**Application**

It reminds us that the invitation of God is to a feast as joyous as a wedding feast. His invitation is to joy. It is to the joy that the people are invited, and it is the joy he misses, if he refuses the invitation.

It reminds us God's invitation is the invitation of grace. Those who were gathered in from the highways and the byways had no claim on the king at all; they could never have, by any chance, expected an invitation to the wedding feast; as they did not deserve it in the first place.

*The tragedy of life is that it is so often the second bests which shuts out the bests.*

Sometimes a person is so busy making a living and that he fails to live a life. He can be so busy with the administration and organization of life that he forgets life itself.

It reminds us, the real tragedy was that they lost the joy of the wedding feast. If we refuse the invitation of Christ, someday our greatest pain will lie not in the things we suffer but in the realization of the precious things we have missed.

This parable has nothing to do with the clothes we wear to the church, but it has everything to do with the spirit in which we go to God's house. There are garments for the mind and the heart and soul, that is required when we enter his banquet, we need to wear when entering his presence. Like the garment of love and expectation, the garment of humble penitence, the garment of faith, and the garment of reverence. These are the garments without which we ought not to approach God.