



Around the Word Bible Study

Trinity, 2015

Parables: "Of Wedding Garments & Outer Darkness" Matthew 22:1-14

"Counterfeits are among money, but they are not money; chaff is among the wheat, but it is not wheat; so these are among Christians, but they are not Christians. This is sufficient on to- day's Gospel. Let us pray God for grace, that none of us may come to such a precious and glorious marriage feast without a wedding garment."

~Martin Luther on the man without a wedding garment, Sermon on Matthew 22:1-14

"Do you see both in the former parable (Matt 21:33-44, Wicked Tenants) and in this the difference between the Son and the servants? Do you see at once the great affinity between both parables, and the great difference also? For this also indicates God's long-suffering, and His great providential care, and the Jews' ingratitude... But this parable has something also more than the other. For it proclaims beforehand both the casting out of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; and it indicates together with this also the strictness of the life required, and how great the punishment appointed for the careless."

~St. John Chrysostom, Sermon on Matthew 22:1-14

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Introduction: This is one in a whole series of parables Jesus tells from within the Temple where the chief priests and Pharisees have challenged His authority. There is a break in the parable telling long enough to expose the mindset of the those who oppose Him (cf. Mt 21:45-46). And now Jesus tells yet another. The scenery has changed from the previous parable (Mt 21:33-46) but the same themes continue: Jesus is the Son of God; the chief priests and Pharisees continue in Israel's persistent rejection of God's prophets and now reject His Son; the Gentiles will be included in the Kingdom of God. Additionally, the same absurdity persists that was conveyed in previous parables: 1) the abundant grace of God, 2) the faithless objection to our benevolent Lord by his own people.

Opening: Psalm 15

¹O LORD, who shall sojourn | in your tent?*

Who shall dwell on your | holy hill?

²**He who walks blamelessly and does | what is right***

and speaks truth | in his heart;

³who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his | neighbor,*

nor takes up a reproach a- | gainst his friend;

⁴**in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who | fear the LORD; ***

who swears to his own hurt and | does not change;

⁵who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the | innocent.*

He who does these things shall nev- | er be moved.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son* and to the Holy | Spirit; as it was in the be- | ginning,* is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Read Matthew 21:33-44

v.1-2: And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,"

Who is the son (bridegroom) in this parable? (cf. Mt. 9:15) By extension, who is the King (father) who gives the feast?

A bride is never mentioned in the parable, but you can't have a wedding without one. Who is the bride? (cf. Eph. 5:22-33, especially v. 25 & 32)

To what real event does the wedding feast in the story point? (cf. Rev. 19:9)

v.3: "and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come."

Related to the first question, who would be the people originally invited to the wedding feast? (cf. Mt. 21:43 and understand to whom Jesus is speaking)

v.4: "Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."'"

What does the repeated invitation of the king indicate about his nature? How does this reflect the nature of God? (cf. Ex. 34:6, Ps. 78:38, & 2 Pet. 3:9)

How does this reaction by those invited reflect the way the people of Israel are described by the prophets? (cf. Is. 65:2-5)

v.5 "But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,"

How do the First and Third Commandments

apply here? Refer to Luther's *Small Catechism*.

v.6 "while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them."

How does the absurdity of the people's treatment of the servants bearing the king's invitation reflect the absurdity of Israel's treatment of God's prophets? What were some contemporary examples of this which took place not long after Jesus' ascension? (cf. Acts 7, Acts 12:1-5)

v.7 "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."

What future event does this verse anticipate? (cf. Mt. 24:1-2, 15-21)

In the Lutheran Confessions, the *Formula of Concord Solid Declaration* (Article XI, 41) references this parable and cites Matthew 23:37. How does that passage of Scripture apply to this parable and specifically this verse?

v.8-10: "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.'" And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

What was it that made those who were invited (but were unwilling to come) unworthy?

How does Acts 13:46 reflect the message of this parable and specifically these verses?

What is to be made of the fact that the servants gathered "both bad and good" for the wedding feast? (cf. Mt. 21:31-32)

v.11-14 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

This is the climax of the entire parable. All of the gracious

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inviting and gathering has led to this moment. To what might the "wedding garment" refer? (cf. Rev. 7:9)

Read Matthew 18:21-35. How does the man without the wedding garment compare to the first servant in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (esp. v. 28)? To what might the wedding garment refer? (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-57, 2 Cor. 5:1-5, Gal. 3:27)



How does the response of the chief priests and Pharisees to Jesus throughout Chapter 21 (esp. v.45-46) and 22 (esp v.15ff) reflect how the king's invitation is received in the parable? What does this say of the chief priests' and Pharisees' true status in the kingdom of God?

In Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 we are shown that the kingdom of heaven has come with the coming of Jesus. In Matt 8:5-13 Jesus commends the faith of the centurion and then compares it with the chief priests and Pharisees (the "sons of the kingdom") whom he says will be "thrown into the outer darkness." How long has this disparity in the reception of God's gifts been going on? (cf., e.g., Gen. 3 & 4, 11; Jdg. 17:6 & 21:25, Isa. 53:6)

Based upon the question above, what is ultimately at the heart of this rejection of God and his Gifts? (cf. Rom. 9)

What is it that distinguishes those who receive the kingdom of God in faith, and who thus have a place within it, from those who reject it and thus are among those who will be cast out? (cf. Mt. 9, Mt. 15:21-28, Mk. 9:14-29). What comfort does this give to us who struggle daily with all manner of sins and who likewise wrestle with doubt concerning our salvation and the promises of Christ?

Closing: O Gracious Lord, I Firmly Am Believing (LSB, 635)

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