

Sermon for October 12th, 2014

Eighteenth Sunday of Pentecost, Matthew 22:1-14

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

As I said in the announcements, there is going to be a **wedding** here today. Right after the worship service we are going to transition rather quickly to a hustling bustling place where the bride and her attendants will be coming in to get ready and the groom and the groomsmen will be **anxiously** awaiting the event. The bride will be arriving shortly after our worship service is over.

At the **last** meeting I had with the young couple the bride told me that her mother-in-law to be was **quite** concerned about how the guests were going to be dressed as she has some rather strict preconceived ideas of how people '**ought**' to look when they come to a wedding. **No** jeans, **no** street type clothing, **nothing** distasteful, etc. The mother-in-law to be's thought is that when one comes to a wedding one comes dressed up, clothed just right to be respectful of the sanctity of the event which they are coming to attend—which is fine, but the bride's thought is that people can come dressed as they would like. The **main** thing for her is that people come and be a part of the marriage celebration. I guess we will see how this all plays out in a few hours.

Maybe you can see some correlation between the expectations of the mother-in-law to be and our gospel reading for this morning as we read about the parable that Jesus told about the king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.

First of all, as I was telling the youth in youth bible study last Sunday, a parable is something which is not only what it seems to be on the surface. But there is a lot of metaphor, allegory, symbolism, or **deeper** meaning in a parable because in actuality in our story for today it would probably seem rather odd for us to refuse the invitation of a king to attend such a **stately** event for his son where the dinner had been prepared, the oxen and fat calves had been **slaughtered**, and **everything** had been made ready. I also believe it would it seem **odd** for us to turn down such a request not only once but twice as those invited in the parable did. In the society in which Jesus lived refusing the king's invitation would have brought **shame** upon the king. **Plus**, those invited made light of the king's request to join him and they gave some pretty flimsy excuses for not coming: one went to his farm, another to his business, others seized the king's slaves mistreated them and even killed them.

Was this **any way** to respond to the invitation of the king? The king's intention was about joy and celebration for his son but they **refused** to accept that. They were **determined** to keep their distance no matter what excuse they had to come up with.

The king was **enraged**. That was no way to treat the king's slaves—that **shameful** treatment and murder would have been seen as a direct insult to the king's honor. In response the king sent his troops to destroy the murderers and burn their city.

Stung by the rejection of the invited guests the king sent his slaves into the streets to invite **everyone** to the wedding banquet as the king wanted the wedding hall **filled** with people. He did not care if they were good or bad people. He wanted that hall filled. After all the king was one who **deserved respect**.

Respect—a word which means: awe, consideration, esteem, reverence, honor, tribute.

Now here is where the story becomes a bit odd in my **humble** opinion. The king noticed a man who was **not** wearing a wedding robe. He wanted to know how the man got into the wedding hall dressed as he was. Not knowing what to say about his attire the man was speechless—he didn't know **what** to say. The king had him sent out bound hand and foot into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Is that **any way** to treat a guest? After all the man had been called in off the street to attend the event. To be sent into the outer darkness just because he did not have on the right wedding clothes? Oh, my I **hope** that doesn't happen at the wedding today!!!!

Let us look at the **other** side of the parable—the **deeper** part—the part **below** the surface, the symbolism, and double meaning. Whatever may have been the focus of the story when it was **first** told—in the gospel of Matthew this parable typifies final judgment. Matthew’s gospel was written **after** the Jews were rejected by the Romans, **after** the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and **after** the Gentiles had become part of the church. So Matthew was calling attention to the **final** judgment which was no minor theme for him.

Let us look closer at this so we can begin to **understand** how we might see ourselves as a part of this parable even today. The **king** is God, the **son**, the **bridegroom**, and the **messianic** banquet is for Jesus—the Messiah, the Bread of Life—who will **eventually** be mistreated and killed. The same will be done to Jesus’ followers who keep God’s invitation of righteousness and mercy open to those they meet. But what was **lost** to those who were invited was now given to the **regular** folks—those who had **no** position to guard, to those who had **no** worries about protecting themselves or their honor—to those who were **simply** ready to enjoy what was offered. **Anyone** was welcome to come because what had been offered as an invitation to a small segment of the population had **now** become an invitation for **all**—Jews and Gentiles alike. God’s kingdom is like that.

Yes, the good and the bad were invited into the celebration but when the king came in to be among them they needed to be clothed with the **results** of his

generous invitation. To wear a wedding garment is to know the significance of the occasion, to allow God's gracious invitation to change our lives and to live accordingly. There is a **need** to be clothed with the '*cloak of righteousness*' as the prophet Isaiah said and I quote, "*I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*" End quote.

Yes, the people had come in off the street in their ordinary dress, but **once** the wedding banquet party is in full swing, when the king himself is there, **something more is required**. There was a **choice** which had to be made. We too can **clothe ourselves** in God's righteousness and mercy **or not** and when the time comes we can be bound hand and foot and **thrown** into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth—or not.

Those who made light of the king's invitation and did not come to the party were **not open to receive** what the king was freely offering. So **for us** here today—the king is offering us the same thing—to know the significance of the occasion, to allow God's gracious invitation to **change** our lives and to **live** accordingly. We have been **freely offered** an invitation to the party. To feast at the table. It is **up to us** to turn the receiving into a response. Don't let the king's invitation to you go for nothing—there's no time to be lost, we can all clothe

ourselves in **God's righteousness and mercy**—or not. I guess the clothing truly **does matter** after all. **AMEN.**