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17th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermons
October 9, 2011

MATTHEW 22:1 - 14 "THE FEAST"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Come to the wedding feast of the Son prepared by the Father through the Son for you. Come, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Come, sinner, by invitation of the King and receive forgiveness. Come, you who are dismayed by death and receive comfort, hope, and life. Come, enjoy the gifts of the King, the fellowship of His people, and His personal favor. Come, for all is prepared, all has been made ready for you!

You have been called, you are invited to the wedding feast of the Son, but you are not the first. Long ago the people of Israel were called and invited to the same wedding feast that the King was preparing. The people of Israel were the first of the peoples to be invited; this was only fitting since the LORD God was their King. The LORD God had delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt; He brought them into the promised land; and He dwelt in their midst as King. Other peoples were invited too, as you have been invited, but the people of Israel were the first to hear of this great feast; they were the first to be called.

Isaiah 25:6-9 describes this great feast, the great wedding feast of the King's Son that the people of Israel were the first to be called and invited to:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.
And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
It will be said on that day,
"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the LORD; we have waited for him;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

What a great and wonderful feast the King, the LORD the God of Israel, has promised! The best of food, the best of wine for those who come; not only for Israel but for all peoples! A feast upon the holy mountain of the LORD, where the King will give

the most amazing and astonishing of gifts; the King actually promises to swallow up death forever and to remove the reproach, the shame, of His people! What feast could be better? What feast could be more wonderful? This is the feast that one must be at! This is the feast not to miss! This is the great wedding feast of the Son, and the King has invited you!

Strangely not everyone invited to this wedding feast wants to come. Shockingly people actually ignore, refuse, and resist the invitations of the King! Strangely people insist that they have other things of more importance to attend to than to prepare themselves for this feast and come. Shockingly people actually despise the magnanimous provisions of the King and His liberal grace!

Many of the Chief-priests, the Pharisees, and the other leaders of the Jews in the first century were among those who did not want to come to the feast. God sent John the Baptist to prepare them for the coming feast and to invite them again; he said, "Repent for the reign of heaven is at hand." The LORD was coming soon all needed to be ready; now was the time to turn from sin and unbelief, now was the time to believe the Good News that King would set all wrongs to right and gather His people to the great feast.

The Chief-priest, the Pharisees, and the leaders of the Jews ignored John and then they ignored King's Son. Jesus too called the lost sheep of the house of Israel to repent and believe the Good News; Jesus invited sinners to come to Him and to come to the feast that His Father was preparing. Some ignored Jesus. Some went about their own work and business. The rest began plotting how they would seize and kill Him, because they were resolved not to come to the feast of the Son that King was preparing

Jesus knew the plots and plans of the Chief-priests, the Pharisees, and the rest of the leaders. He knew that their plotting would lead to His death as the ransom for the many. And yet just days before His death Jesus spoke crushing words of judgment against them in order to demolish their hearts of stone. Jesus yet wanted even these hard hearted undeserving leaders of the people to repent and come to feast.

1 And Jesus replied and again He spoke in a parable to them saying, 2 "The reign of heaven has become like a certain king, who prepared a wedding feast for his son. 3 And he sent his servants to call those who had been invited into the wedding feast, but they kept wishing not to enter. 4 Again he sent other servants saying, 'Behold I have prepared my meal, my bulls and the fattened calves have been slaughtered and all things are ready. Come into the wedding feast.'" 5 But they having ignored it departed, one into his own field, and one about his business; 6 but the rest after seizing his servants they insulted them and killed them. 7 And the king became wrathful and after he sent his armies he destroyed those murders and he torched their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those who had been invited are not worthy; 9 therefore go upon the crossroads of the roads and as many as you find call them into the wedding feast.' 10 And those slaves went out into the roads and they gathered all whom they found, evil people and good people; and the wedding feast was filled with those reclining at the table. 11 And after the king entered he looked on those who were reclining at table and he saw there a man not clothed with wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you enter here even though you are not having a wedding clothing?' But he was silent. 13 Then the king said to the servants,

‘After binding his feet and hands and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 For many are called, but few are elect.”

The first part of Jesus’ parable is easy for us to understand. The King is Jesus’ heavenly Father and Jesus is His Son. The Father has graciously made all preparations for the great wedding feast of His Son. The Father has made provision for the forgiveness of sins. The Father has made provision to swallow up death. The Father has made provision for the best food and best wine to be served. The Father has made all these provisions through His Son. The Father sent the Son to die as the ransom for the many and He rose Him as the first-fruits of those to rise from the dead. God has made all the provisions for the Wedding Feast of His Son, the Banquet of Eternal Life. What is more the Father, the King, has sent out His servants, prophet after prophet, and even the apostles of Jesus to invite those of the house of Israel to the Wedding Feast.

The problem was the Chief-priests, the Pharisees, and the rest of the leaders was that they refused the invitation of the King; they didn’t want to come. They didn’t want to come on the King’s terms. They even violently refused the King’s gracious call and invitation. So their lot would be destruction! The armies of the LORD, the Roman legions sacked the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and torched the city because they rejected His invitation and murdered His Son; this all happened in 70 A.D. a fierce judgment against their unrepentance and rejection of the King’s Son and the Wedding Feast prepared in His honor.

But our God and King will not have the Wedding Feast for His Son empty; He will not let the rejection of some foil His gracious plans and preparations. The King sends His servants out to call and invite whoever they may find- good or evil it matters not; all are invited to come to the Wedding Feast that He has prepared through His Son!

Verses 8-10 make this clear: 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those who had been invited are not worthy; 9 therefore go upon the crossroads of the roads and as many as you find call them into the wedding feast.’ 10 And those slaves went out into the roads and they gathered all whom they found, evil people and good people; and the wedding feast was filled with those reclining at the table.

The last few verses of our text (11-14) are the ones that are a bit more confusing and perhaps troubling. The King picks a guest out of the crowd at the feast. He notices that he is not dressed in wedding clothes and He confronts Him. And the King has the man bound and thrown out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. What does this mean? What is the Lord Jesus teaching us?

A few years ago a movie called the Wedding Crashers came out. The movie was about two guys, John and Jeremy, who crashed weddings every summer. To be clear John’s and Jeremy’s motivations and purpose in crashing weddings was completely immoral and self-indulgent. They just wanted to enjoy a summer of free food, wine, and especially women. John and Jeremy clearly broke the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th Commandments repeatedly; as such they were guilty of breaking not only

those Commandments, but also the 1st Commandment and all of God's Law. They did not love their neighbors as themselves nor did they love God above all things.

Yet there some things we can learn from John and Jeremy that are important to our text. John and Jeremy never crashed a wedding in their normal everyday clothes; they always wore the appropriate wedding clothes. They knew what kind of wedding they were going to and they always wore the appropriate tux or suite. They were dressed for the wedding and looked like they belonged at the wedding. Further they acted like they belonged at each wedding they crashed; they rejoiced and made merry with all the family and friends gathered. And finally they even tried to ingratiate themselves in some way to the wedding hosts. John and Jeremy acted like they were invited guests to these weddings and they most certainly dressed like they belonged at the weddings.

But not so with the man at the Wedding Feast of the Son. The King noticed right away the man there at the Wedding Feast who was not wearing wedding clothes. This man was doing what was completely inappropriate in the ancient world and today; he was present at the Wedding Feast but not dressed for it! The man was graciously invited to the Wedding Feast, but he did not come as the King invited him. The man was clothed with his own clothes, with his own righteousness, and not with the wedding clothes, not with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The only clothes appropriate for the Wedding Feast of the Son are robes of righteousness purchased and won by Christ and given to you through the Gospel call, God's invitation for you!

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

(Isaiah 61:10 ESV)

The righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ is for all people; it is promised and given in the Gospel and received by faith in the promise. The righteousness of the LORD Jesus Christ is for all people- the good and the evil; the so called moral and immoral. Only the righteousness of Christ Jesus suffices as the appropriate wedding clothes; one's own righteousness, one's own clothes will not suffice! None deserve to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ; being clothed with Christ is the gracious gift of the King. Yes even and especially for immoral and selfish people like John and Jeremy, the wedding crashers, Christ's righteousness covers even their unrighteousness. Yes even and especially for you, as immoral and selfish as you are, Christ's righteousness covers even you!

So come to the wedding feast of the Son prepared by the Father through the Son for you. Come, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Come, sinner, by invitation of the King and receive forgiveness. Come, you who are dismayed by death and receive

comfort, hope, and life. Come, enjoy the gifts of the King, the fellowship of His people, and His personal favor. As you come invite your family, friends, and neighbors, all whom you come in contact with, to come with you. Come, for all is prepared, all has been made ready for you, Amen!