

An Invitation for You

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Calling / Matthew 22:1–14

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction - an Invitation

Invitations are an honor to receive, especially when they are personal and directed to you. You receive invitations for birthday parties, anniversary celebrations, confirmations, graduations, and weddings. Some of these you also get those Save the Date cards or magnets so that you can put it on your calendar, months before the official invitations go out. Invitations are an honor.

Today we are going to explore this thing called an invitation. You notice in the parable that king sends out two or three invitations to his guests, depending on how you read the text. Perhaps, this could be the equivalent of the “Save The Date” Card, then the invitations, and then the phone call when you have not RSVPed to the wedding in a timely fashion.

Have you ever been so preoccupied with other things in life that you forgot to RSVP or even forgot about the invitation and planned other things?

The thing is in our text, it’s still Holy Week, Jesus is still teaching in parables. Jesus is preoccupied with what is about to happen so He’s teaching them about the kingdom of heaven. His desire is that all men are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Sure, he knows his future, He knows what is about to happen.

Preoccupied

Yet the heavenly realms or eternity I’m guessing is not something you think about very much of the time is it. Maybe though you are based on your health or your age? Perhaps you don’t want to be preoccupied with thinking of the kingdom of heaven because you have other preoccupations that take away from this heavenly thinking? Takes you away from this heavenly invitations.

The thing is you and we do become preoccupied with life. Preoccupied with what the world wants us to be. Preoccupied with accomplishments, desires, motivations, aspirations - to the extent that the kingdom of heaven is not really all that appealing. This can be God's kingdom of heaven here on earth or the eternal reign of God in the New Creation.

To be honest, oftentimes the kingdom of heaven is not our focus. We are preoccupied with the pressures and pleasures of life. We're preoccupied elsewhere, but it really shouldn't surprise that the mind of Christ in our text is actually focused on being preoccupied for you as He teaches about the kingdom of heaven.

"The kingdom of heaven is like," Jesus says. It's like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. How should we understand this? We should understand this in the case of God the Father and God the Son. The king sends his servants out to those who were invited with the invitation at once...no one shows. How devastating (if it was you throwing the party.) A second time he sends them out, and this time we find out why no one is there. One is more interested in his farm, another his business. They are preoccupied with earthly things. And others are hostile to the invitation. The invitation goes out to the chosen people of Israel, but they refuse it. You may say to yourself, "Why don't they want this free gift of salvation." The answer is simple... "They don't want it." Not on God's terms anyways. They want it when it seems right and they can think about it. They want it on their schedule, in their own time.

And this is just like you. Our minds and lives are preoccupied with other things besides kingdom work. Maybe here is it your farms, it's your businesses, it's your schools, it's your sports - whether it be professional, collegiate, high school - as a fan, or your kids, or you yourself play. It could be your other activities including your vacation homes, your hobbies, your families. All good things that we can become preoccupied with and things that can take our minds off of heavenly things. We can find all sorts of things to use to reject the king's invitation. We reject his invitation to come to the wedding feast openly.

Party Clothes

Finally, after the servants have been going to highways and the byways, the wedding hall was being filled. The multitudes are flocking to the wedding feast. The room is filling up and Jesus turns to the emphasis of their clothing. Jesus points out in the parable that there is one "who had no wedding garment." This is stressing the fact that the king observes something outrageous and insulting. This is a slap in the face of the righteousness of the king. There's a man not wearing the garment graciously provided to him. He is pretending. He stands among the guests, insisting that can attend the banquet on his own merit, again on his own terms. He refuses to be humbled by the mercy of the king, leaving him either naked or in a clown suit. He pretends. He had pretended all along. He has never understood true freedom. And we are back to "he doesn't want it," aren't we.

Why? It's because we are back to building our own kingdoms. We take care of and nurture them as if our own little kingdoms will be our eternity. That's just like you isn't it. It's me, too. Tell me that you wake up each morning, and go about your day with the eternal kingdom of heaven in view. The one into which you were baptized. The one into which you were given the party clothes. And you say, "Wait a minute! I have things to do! I'm busy down here!" You have other things on your mind. You are preoccupied with your own little life. That's the point! The human preoccupation in this short-lived world shoves the coming forever kingdom aside because the human heart deems this world more worthy.

The human heart and human mind are preoccupied with worldly things. What are you thinking about right now? That you are a redeemed child of God or are you thinking what needs to be done or that the Vikings are going to lose in just a few hours.

The feast is for you.

You and I we are constantly telling ourselves, telling God, "I'll consider it when it comes." We pray in the Lord's prayer as well... "Thy kingdom come." Dear family of God...all along, the kingdom of heaven *has* already come by the way of the cross of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection from the dead. You get to taste it at his feast. For it is for you. You taste it when you receive the Holy Supper of Christ's body and blood for you. But how long after the chalice do you again leave the eternal behind?

Yet still notice what the Father continues to do again and again, while we grip to things of the earth so tightly. AND if they be taken away, here comes the hostility. Then comes the "Where are you God?" And you don't realize that God is replacing this kingdom with the next. The one Jesus is preoccupied with. We are so far from contemplating "dying with Christ" aren't we. This is because we are never finished with our own intentions. We are never finished with our own things that preoccupy our hearts and minds.

That's why the sole comfort throughout this whole parable is that the Invitation is for you. And he continues to invite. The mercy of God comes to you through the invitation.

"A king...sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast.

Again, he sent other servants,... 'My oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'

Go therefore to the main roads and invite you to the wedding feast as many as you find."

I don't just see Jesus sending servants to the main roads...I see him also sending servants to the nooks and the crannies to find people to come to the wedding feast. We are the ones in the outlying areas. We are not in line at the box office wondering if the banquet is going to be sold out. However, the thing is, the king invites you to the feast. He does it again and again and

again. And the beauty is this: the peace of the Gospel is knowing He does this despite of you and your imperfection, your preoccupations. If he doesn't do in spite of you, then there is no grace, no joy. Jesus says, "This is what the kingdom of heaven is like!" It's all about grace and mercy. It's all for you. Dear redeemed, you have been found. And the only way you can be preoccupied with the kingdom of heaven is knowing that it only comes to you by the way of Christ. And that alone gives it its values. The invitation is itself the value - in which through himself the Messiah achieves the atonement for the sins of the world and absolves you of your preoccupations elsewhere.

It is only there that you have the perspective of the coming kingdom—knowing that he sought you out. You get to go to the feast because he sought you out. I get to go to the feast because he sought me out! And it is here. Every Sunday in the word received in your ears. It's right here at the altar every time you eat and drink of it "often in remembrance of me." He loves you that much! So continue to receive, continue to come to receive the foretaste of the feast to come. Leave this place with your sins forgiven, and when the Supper is offered, leave with all of your sins forgiven, because here at the foretaste of the feast to come, Christ comes to you and forgives you all of your sins. The invitation is for you. The feast is prepared for you.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.