

PLOT TWIST

"OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS"

MATTHEW 22:1-14

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. *Ephesians 2:8-9*

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

Everybody loves a wedding, especially wedding guests these days! According to *The Knot*, a national leader in the wedding planning industry, couples in the US are spending more than ever on that most special of days. *The Knot's* 2016 survey of over 13,000 newlyweds revealed some amazing trends among those planning their nuptials. The average spent (not including the honeymoon) in the US in 2016 on a single wedding was an all-time high of over \$35,000. New Yorkers spent on average the most on a wedding (over \$75,000) and those in Arkansas spent the least (\$19,000).

While wedding spending is on the rise, the number of guests per wedding is on the decline. More is being spent per wedding guest than ever before. Unique and memorable guest experience is a high priority among wedding hosts today. Seventy-five percent of all couples surveyed reported they planned at least one

Do not economize on the wedding rites; do not prune them of their splendor... A wedding is not house-keeping.

- Victor Hugo

"signature wedding element" to make an impact on those in attendance. Guest entertainment spending at weddings has tripled since 2009. Getting married is not just about getting great photos and videos and saying "I do." Weddings today are trending toward extravaganzas that no one will soon forget.

Wise Solomon once said, "There is nothing new under the sun." Weddings in many cultures have typically been "Wow!" events with the purpose of displaying family pride and wealth. In the time of Jesus, weddings were community affairs where entire families celebrated for weeks on end. To be the guest of a wedding in New Testament times was often the equivalent of departing on a pleasure cruise or vacationing in a five-star hotel. To be a guest was an honor. To honor the host of the wedding was a major social responsibility. A wedding banquet was often the lifetime achievement of parents, children and extended family.

Jesus was in the habit of telling stories, often in the form of parables, that used extremes and hyperbole to express life lessons. These "extreme" stories often referenced occasions beyond the normal in order to keep the attention of hearers. Jesus' parables often shocked those listening with details that were anything but conventional. In Matthew 22, Jesus told a story about a king's wedding banquet for his son. The inclusion of a king in Jesus' story pushed his story to the extreme and would demand the highest form of respect and response from the other characters in his story. The mention of a king in a land of occupation would also heighten anticipation in the hearers. Wedding banquets in Jesus' day were often extreme displays of opulence, and even more so when hosted by a king. Jesus' story of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) included extra details and "plot twists" that would challenge the mindsets of hearers then and even now.

Matthew 22:1-14

1Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

4Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

5But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. 6The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

8Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.

13Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

14For many are invited, but few are chosen."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline the word "wedding" throughout the parable.
- * Box the word "king" in the parable.
- * Draw a line connecting all the occurrences of "servants" in the parable.
- * Double underline the phrase showing comparison in v. 2.
- * Put brackets around the repeated action word in v. 3-4.
- * Circle the words of negative action in v.6..
- * Draw a line from the word "guests" in v. 10 to all the people included as "guests" in v.9-10.
- * Circle the words "wedding guests" in v.11-12.
- * Double underline the response of the man called "friend".
- * Draw a line from the word "many" in v. 14 to corresponding words in the parable.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What elements in this parable (Matthew 22:1-14) are shared with the other parables found in Matthew 21?
2. Why did the invited guests (Matthew 22:3-6) not come to the wedding banquet?
3. What was the king's response to those who spurned his invitations?
4. Who ends up coming to the wedding banquet? What does this alternate guest list say about the king?
5. What unexpected "plot twists" are found in Matthew 22:1-10?
6. Why would "not wearing wedding clothes" be so important to the king?
7. The man "not wearing wedding clothes" was speechless after the king's question. What might this indicate concerning the man's presence at the banquet?
8. In the parable, what does "the darkness" represent?
9. What is so surprising about Matthew 22:14?
10. Is entering the kingdom of heaven easy or hard? Explain your answer.

We consider in Matthew 22:1-14 the last of three parables Jesus told in the courts of Jerusalem's Temple. After this parable, Jesus was challenged with questions and traps from a variety of opponents while still teaching in the Temple. Still in the Temple, he pronounced "woes" upon Jerusalem in Matthew 23. In Matthew 24, he left the Temple and predicted judgment to come and his own return.

These three Temple parables share a number of common elements. All three parables identify an authority that is powerful yet remote (a father, a landowner and a king). All three stories contain characters that are for and characters that are against the identified authority. Each story concludes with reward and/or judgment. All three stories involve the activity of sons.

These three parables seem to increase in size, intensity and gravity. A larger description of God's judgment and reward grows for those who are loyal to him. "While these parables are distinct from one another, the placing of the three together at this point in Matthew's Gospel adds greatly to their impact, and is an important point to note in interpreting each one individually. All are clearly directed against the Jewish leaders, and all are concerned with the question of who is really acceptable to God, who are his true people. The theme of the failure and rejection of official Israel which runs through these parables is one which recurs more prominently in Matthew's Gospel than in the others" (R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Introduction and Commentary*, 306).

The third Temple parable highlights the widely held traditions of weddings. Such a familiar tradition provided a perfect backdrop to show how absurd it would be to defy the great benevolence of God in order to pursue their own agendas.

Understanding a few traditions regarding first century wedding culture can help us draw more insight from this surprising parable found in Matthew 22. "At the time of the betrothal an announcement was sent to the bridegroom's friends to inform them of the forthcoming wedding, and the friends were invited to attend the wedding banquet that would follow. Customarily, twelve months intervened between the betrothal

and the wedding itself; therefore, the invited guests had had ample opportunity to prepare themselves to attend the wedding banquet. In His parable Christ commenced the story when the king, the father of the bridegroom, 'sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come' (Matt. 22:3). This would have been the second invitation, since the first invitation was given at the time of the betrothal. Thus it was sent out to those who had previously been invited. This second invitation announced the date for the wedding and the wedding banquet. Now the guests were expected to attend the wedding banquet. In Christ's symbolism of the parable, those who had been invited refer to the nation with which God had made a covenant, promising them a Messiah who would institute the kingdom of peace and righteousness in which they were privileged to have a part. The response of the guests to this second invitation was quite unexpected, for 'they refused to come' (Matt. 22:3)" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Parables of Jesus*, 139-140).

The unexpected refusal of the king's invitation was made worse by some actually killing the servants sent by the king. This killing of the king's servants echoes the killing mentioned in the previous parable. In a surprising twist, the king is reported to bring judgment upon those who avoid and abuse his servants. Even more surprising, the king commanded that even the people who were on the far edges of his kingdom should be invited to attend the wedding feast of his son. Those who "did not deserve to come" (Matthew 22:8) were those who were now outsiders. The plot continued to twist when the least likely, both "good and bad" (Matthew 22:10) were added to the wedding banquet, now part of the kingdom.

The parable could have ended with the unlikely guests assembled and enjoying the king's banquet. But Jesus continued to surprise his Temple crowd with one more surprising twist in the story. The king came to inspect the attendees of his son's celebration. While mingling with his guests, the king happened upon a guest who did not have on any wedding garments. The absence of appropriate wedding attire (whether missing or stained) would

have been a great insult to the host of the banquet. The disrespectful guest had no answer for his deficiency and the king ordered him banished. One would have expected the king to accept all he had invited. Yet here was a member of the crowd who was present on his own efforts. The parable switches from the perspective of the king into the state of the final judgment of those who do not appreciate the king and do not comply with his terms. Jesus used a closing aphorism of "greater to lesser" to drive home the truth that God determines the participants in his kingdom. He will allow no imposters or self-sufficient subjects in his kingdom. Even those who considered themselves "chosen" by a connection to Abraham could be left out of the "few" who are ultimately "chosen."

The kingdom of heaven (Matthew 22:1) is entirely God's idea. He invites, prepares, judges and rewards all who participate. The king is supreme above the venue, traditions, and even the most impressive of potential prospects. The

kingdom of heaven is not owned by, controlled by, contained by or even entered by the efforts and ingenuity of potential participants.

We cannot impress God with our efforts. We cannot limit him with our lack of interest. We cannot intimidate him with our strength. We cannot slide past his careful inspection. His kingdom operates on his terms alone. We would do best to embrace his invitation and follow his lead. Go to invite others to God's family. Depend upon God's grace to make a way for you.

Salvation by grace is the only way to enter into a relationship with the one true God. Salvation by grace is the only way to enter into God's kingdom. He sent his son, Jesus, to make a way for you and me to enter into God's kingdom. Jesus seeks to wrap us up in his righteousness (Galatians 3:26). We have no other hope than the hope that Jesus offers us. Trust in no one else, not even yourself, when it comes to entrance into God's kingdom. Trust only in God's son, Jesus, as the way to enter and remain in his rest.

The Message of the Passage

God offers you entrance into the lavish celebration of his eternal kingdom.

Do not decline his invitation or discount his messengers. Do not insult

God by attempting to enter his kingdom with your own ingenuity.

Don't be like the many. Be of the few who gratefully accept his kingdom offer only on his gracious terms.

Go and invite others to this kingdom party!

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 2 **wedding banquet** "Marriage was a time for rejoicing. The chief ceremony was the entry of the bride into the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom was the king for a week. During the whole week their majesties wore festal clothes, did not work, and merely looked on at the games - except that now and then the queen joined in a dance.... Big feasts were prepared in the house of the bride and sometimes in the bridegroom's parents' home" (P. Trutza, "Marriage Formalities and Ceremonies," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol 4, 97*).
- v. 7 **destroyed** "This destruction of rebellious subjects and their city parallels other rebellions in Jewish history. Even though he does not mention the temple here, Jesus may be alluding to the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the judgement of the religious establishment in A.D. 70, a theme to which he returns in the Eschatological Discourse (cf. 24:1-3)" (Michael Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew, 716*).
- v. 9 **street corners** One single Greek word. Literally, "ways through which ways go out." Often meant places outside the city where country roads terminate. At other times used of the outer boundaries of a city or country. "Let the servants, then, go out to the country, to the places where the main streets leading out of the city stop and divide (branch off) into side streets" (William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew, 796*). Outsiders and those far from familiar would be found here. The people found here would include both Gentiles and Jewish people who had been ostracized by the faithful Jewish community.
- v.10 **evil and good** "This means that Jesus accepts people the Jewish establishment would regard as evil and therefore totally unacceptable. Of course, those who accept Jesus' invitation do not stay evil, but the point is that Jesus welcomes people that the high priests did not want to include among God's own" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew, 551*).
- v.12 **Friend** "The king greeted him as 'Friend,' a form of address found elsewhere in the New Testament only in 20:13;26:50. In all three passages there is something ironical about the greeting, for the 'friend' in each case is doing something short of friendly action. But 'Friend' is a kindly word, and there is something of an appeal about it" (Morris, 552).
- v.11 **wedding clothes** "Hosts may have provided wedding garments to guests at the door. [Or] ... wedding clothes may simply refer to clean garments as opposed to soiled ones; to come to a wedding in a soiled garment insulted the host, and this host was in no further mood to be insulted. Patrons invited their social dependents to banquets, expecting due honor in return; this man, like the first guests the king invited, has responded to grace with an insult" (Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary, 522*).
- v. 13 **darkness** "The king's final words leave the narrative world of the parable and adopt conventional imagery for hell (cf. Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50). This is a Matthean literary device, used also at the conclusion of other parables (Matt 24:51; 25:30)" (Richard Bauckham, "The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast," *Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 115, Issue 3, Fall 1996, 486*).
- v.14 **Many** "A pithy statement gives a concluding pronouncement to the parable of the wedding feast, but also to the other two preceding parables generally. 'For many are invited, but few are chosen.' 'Many' (polloi) without the article is a common Semitic universalizing expression, which is normally translated 'everyone' or 'all' (cf. 20:28)... By the expression 'many are invited,' Jesus points to a universal invitation to the kingdom of heaven. The counterbalancing point in the second half of the saying, 'but few are chosen,' emphasizes that not all who are invited are chosen" (Wilkins, 718).
- v. 14 **Chosen** "Israel and her leadership had been known as the 'chosen,' but even their privilege is lost through unresponsiveness to Jesus' invitation to the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, while there is an open invitation to the kingdom, from the divine perspective it is only God's sovereign choice that effects salvation. From a human perspective it is only those who respond to the call appropriately that are part of the banquet" (Wilkins, 718).
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Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

When my kids were in elementary school birthday parties were stressful, but fun. We sent invitations and knew exactly how many people to expect. I would buy the correct amount of Superman, or whatever the theme happened to be, plates with matching cups and napkins. It worked fine until one year when my son decided to make his own invitations and invited everyone he knew plus some he didn't. I remember the growing sense of panic as people kept coming. Did I have enough plates? Can I pass off Twinkies as birthday cake? The party ended up fine because people mostly come to parties to get something for themselves - fun! In our parable today Jesus tells of a king who throws a wedding party for his son and none of the invited guests come. So, the king sends his servants out to invite others. The King Himself provides the required attire. The King rejects those who try to come by their own merit in their own clothes as the man without wedding clothes did. This story reminds us that we need to be clothed in Christ's righteousness. The kingdom of heaven is like a wedding feast for the Lamb (Jesus) and His bride (the Church). Those who receive the invitation to come will be clothed in Jesus' righteousness. And this will be the ultimate party! I hope you say "yes" to the invitation.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Heb 4:14-16

1. What happened to the people the king had first invited to the banquet?
2. Who came to the wedding banquet?
3. What happened to the man who did not have on wedding clothes?

What Do You Think

The king provided clothes for the people who attended the banquet. Why do you think the one man wouldn't wear them? Salvation is God's gift to us and we don't do anything to earn it? In what ways do we try?

What R U Going To Do

Throw a party this week! It may be just for you and your family. Plan games, help prepare a special treat and make invitations. Pray and thank God for inviting you to his kingdom party.

Core Comp

Salvation by Grace - I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:15 - I meditate on your precepts, and consider your ways.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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