

You have been invited  
Matthew 22:1-14

Good morning and welcome to each one of you to worship on this beautiful, albeit somewhat chilly, Sunday morning. It is my absolute joy and privilege to share the word of the Lord again with you this morning and it is my hope and prayer that on this day, you would feel His presence with you more closely and that in the week to come, you will be assured of His great love, grace and mercy. To that end, our call to worship comes from **Jonah 2, this is Jonah's prayer to the Lord – "1From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 2 He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.**

**3 You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. 4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.' 5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. 6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, Lord my God, brought my life up from the pit. 7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. 8 "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. 9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'"**

Let us pray.

Come to the Alter - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpfuKKH\\_SCE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpfuKKH_SCE)

Our scripture reading this morning is taken from the Gospel of Matthew and I'm reading from chapter 22:1-14. Now this particular passage I suggest has caused some sense of confusion to those who have heard it read or have read it themselves and yet this is such a beautiful passage with a profound message for us today. It is introduced with the words, "*Jesus spoke to them again in parables...*" and what is the purpose of a parable? Is it simply a story, some made up narrative used to get our attention, to lull someone to sleep as a bedtime story? No! There is a profound lesson that should be learned and a much deeper meaning within these stories, and yet, as Jesus explains to the disciples already in Matthew 13, by Him speaking in parables, it is a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-10. This is what Jesus says, **'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'**

Jesus made it clear already in Matthew 13 that He is challenging the spiritual dullness and unfaithful hearts of the Jews. Now, continuing with this challenge, Jesus uses this parable of a king who has prepared a wedding banquet for his son. Now I, though unmarried, do understand that a wedding takes time, it takes an immense amount of planning and work in order to pull-off that special day. The king, we are told, had made all the necessary preparations for this day, everything was put in place, it was ready and the time of celebration had come – but of course, there is a problem. Those who were invited to this celebration chose not to come.

Like most weddings, we must remember that something like the guest list is prepared well in advance, it isn't thrown together the night before, and it is not made up of strangers unknown to anyone within the wedding party. These guests are carefully selected and then invited to join in the celebrations. Now the question remains, is this parable about a wedding? Well no. Jesus is using this parable to highlight two groups of people... and at this point, I want to break this passage down into two shorter section.

Firstly, from verse one to verse six, we see reference to the first group, those who were invited long before the day of celebration arrived. What we see though, is these same people, refused to come, not once, but twice – and not only refused, but mistreated, abused and killed the king's messengers. At this point in time, we must ask ourselves who these people are. This is an image used by Jesus to refer to God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. They refused the Lord's invitation multiple times, they scoffed at the sight of His messengers, they mistreated, abused and even killed those whom the Lord sent. And so, on multiple occasions, was it not the Lord who punished those who were unfaithful? Was it not the Lord who passed judgement upon the nation because of their disobedience and rejection? Was it not the nation who decided to go their own way, one to his field, another to his business? And this is what Jesus says in verse 8, ***“Those I invited did not deserve to come.”***

The second, from verse seven onwards, is a reference to the so-called strangers. They are called on the day of the celebration to join in – not simply a select few, not only those who look like they have all their stuff together, it is the good and the bad and the wedding all was filled with guests. But there is one guest who clear stands out and that is the one who is inappropriately dressed. Now the question that is always asked is, if he was pulled into this wedding banquet last minute, with no warning or notice, why is he so harshly treated by the king?

Well to understand this, we must understand the context behind it. Culturally speaking now, it was the duty and the responsibility of the king (that would apply to any host now) to provide wedding clothes and this would have been particularly applicable under these circumstances because these guests were invited last minute so to speak. Having follow the correct procedure as was the custom, the guest who was inappropriately dressed would have been given the opportunity to wear the correct garments. We can then say that once again, a choice was made to deny what was offered, a choice was made to offend and insult the king. And what results from this is a clear reference to severe punishment.

You see, in the first section, the focus is on Israel's rejection of God followed by God's rejection of Israel. In the second, the focus shifts towards an undeserved invitation into God's Kingdom followed by the need to respond on the part of the recipient. We, an underserving people, have received an undeserved invitation, and we have been provided with the wedding garments, that is, the righteousness that this invitation requires, remembering that we have a responsibility to clothe ourselves appropriately for this celebration. May He shroud you with His love and His righteousness from now and forever.

Amen.

Let us pray.

**Fierce** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll1JKBuz-AY>

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