

“Banquet Gone Wrong!”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

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The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of Matthew, chapter 22, verses 1 through 14. I'll be reading from Eugene Peterson translations, *The Message*. Jesus responded by telling still more stories. “God’s kingdom,” he said, “is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son. He sent out servants to call in all the invited guests. And they wouldn’t come! “He sent out another round of servants, instructing them to tell the guests, ‘Look, everything is on the table, the prime rib is ready for carving. Come to the feast!’

“They only shrugged their shoulders and went off, one to weed his garden, another to work in his shop. The rest, with nothing better to do, beat up on the messengers and then killed them. The king was outraged and sent his soldiers to destroy those thugs and level their city. “Then he told his servants, ‘We have a wedding banquet all prepared but no guests. The ones I invited weren’t up to it. Go out into the busiest intersections in town and invite anyone you find to the banquet.’

The servants went out on the streets and rounded up everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless. And so the banquet was on—every place filled.

“When the king entered and looked over the scene, he spotted a man who wasn’t properly dressed. He said to him, ‘Friend, how dare you come in here looking like that!’ The man was speechless. Then the king told his servants, ‘Get him out of here—fast. Tie him up and ship him to hell. And make sure he doesn’t get back in.’

“That’s what I mean when I say, ‘Many get invited; only a few make it.’” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. God, whose mercy is wide and broad, give us ears to hear, hearts that are soft, and patience to focus on this text. Come Holy Spirit and meet us where we're at today. Bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word. Amen. Today's text is difficult. I read through it and thought to myself, "Gee, why not choose Luke's version of the parable of the banquet. It's not complicated and much easier to understand. Mathew's parable is on the violent side. However, here we are in the year of the book of Matthew, so why not continue.

In the story we have a royal king who is throwing a banquet for his son, but it looks like nobody's interested in attending. And it's not like they didn't have plenty of time to prepare and clear the date. In line with the customs of the Jewish people, invitations were sent out but the time wasn't given until later. When everything *was* ready, a final summons was sent out to the guests! Everything's ready the messengers proclaimed! But the king's final summons was terribly rejected. Everybody was too busy. It wasn't like the final invite wasn't tempting! Everything was on the table and cooked—the oxen, the fat calves, the prime rib—and it was getting cold!

Everyone gave their reasons for not being able to attend. They definitely were all legit reasons. Some had to weed their garden and others had to attend to their businesses. It wasn't like they were engaging in some illegal activity or attempting to deceive. They were all being honest. All this rejection might seem strange to some. After all, you throw a big party with lots of food and drink and nobody wants to come?

What happens next in the story seems to come out of some horror Halloween movie you might see this time of year. It makes no sense. The messengers who invited everyone were beaten up and killed! Outrageous behavior! The king who did the inviting for his son was appalled! His response was to have the big thugs

killed and the streets of the town leveled. He was upset! But what now? He tried to make thoughtful invitations to *just the right guests*, but it didn't seem to matter. So this is what he did.

The king told his messengers to go out again and invite anybody they set their eyes on. Forget about being politically correct. That didn't seem to work! So go ahead, invite the homeless, heroin addicts, selfish and in-debt citizens, foreigners, those with a green card, those without a green card, the good bad and ugly—doesn't matter the king said—invite them all! So that's what the messengers did. In no time at the banquet room was filled to capacity.

Then, the king entered the banquet hall and immediately his eyes landed on a guest who didn't have the proper party attire on. It's like the guy had purposely ignored the dress code. Now this was totally outrageous, because the proper attire had already been provided, and the man knew it. For some reason this guy decided he didn't need to listen. He did what he wanted. He made up his own rules. He didn't follow the king's instructions.

The king said this to the ill-dressed person, 'Friend, how dare you come in here looking like that!' The man was speechless. Then the king told his servants, 'Get him out of here—fast. Tie him up and ship him to hell. And make sure he doesn't get back in.' Wow! So much for making up your own rules in life—so much for doing exactly what you want when you want to do it—so much for having your own interpretation of how to get into this eternal life celebration party!

So what're we to make out of all this? I think one way of thinking is this. Once we accept God's gracious and all-embracing invitation to receive Christ we can't continue to make up our own rules and decide to live any old way we feel like. Fact is this, everybody's been invited, but once you make the decision to live for Christ do it. Live for Christ! Do your best to stay true to your commitment.

So what's the bottom line here? What's the so what of this parable?

Let's take a look at the man who thought he could do what he wanted and get away with it. He comes into this incredible party, and he ignores the dress code. He decides to do his own thing and make up his own rules. What I would say is that it appears like he's complacent and indifferent to everything. He's not taking it seriously.

Verse 2 says this is a banquet feast not a cheap party at McDonalds. When you're invited to the White House and walk into the lobby and go into the red room, you hear music playing. You see the President of the U.S. *Long* before you shake the President's hand you're going to have to go through security. The first thing they're going to say is "Where's your tux? You're not getting in without one!"

To get into the banquet feast we've got to adhere to the dress code. We've got to have outward clothes that've been tailored by the living Christ—outward clothes that are the result of a heart that's been shaped in relationship to Christ. We make our choices based on our knowledge of God—choices not made from our own self-will. If we intend to be at the banquet feast the inner self must be willing to be changed. We've got to allow the Holy Spirit to show us who we really are and then agree to the spirit's power to help change the things that need to be changed. Things like holding resentments. Hoarding too much of our money. Being unwilling to make friends with someone we consider to be unworthy of our attention. I challenge and encourage you. Let's all allow the Holy Spirit to transform us. Let's pray.

God who is Creator of heaven and earth, instill within us the desire to partner with you in our lives. Move within us to replace our self-will with your will and so secure a place at your table in eternity. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.