

Matthew 22:1-14

1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' 5 But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

The Scripture takes place during Holy Week. The religious leaders challenge Jesus and his response lies in the realm of education. Jesus teaches using parables to tell stories about how God relates to people. He is teaching about how God is not at all pleased with the performance of the religious leaders. The ideal outcome is to reflect on what you might be doing wrong, repent, and get right with God. Instead of being righteous, they rejected Jesus.

There are three parables found together. The parable of two sons where one said he would not help out but ended up helping. Last week we covered the parable of the wicked tenants where the people rejected the cornerstone. Today is the parable of the wedding banquet. The Scripture reveals a disparity of righteousness that makes it necessary for Jesus to go to the outcasts. It is God that decides what righteousness is and who is righteous. According to God, the religious leaders are not the ones that are righteous. The parable of the wedding banquet is a comparison of the kingdom of heaven to the invited guests at the banquet. The king hosts a wedding banquet for his son. The king invites a lot of people that do not come. The king sends out more invitations but the people abuse the messengers and kill them. This upsets the king tremendously and he gets revenge on the murderers. So, the king sends out an invitation on the streets to gather all the people that they could find. Then in the banquet, there was one that was dressed incorrectly. He was not clothed in righteousness. So, they threw him out.

This is a very valuable lesson because it applies to us. The words of Jesus indicate that something more than confession and repentance is needed. There is another important ingredient to our response. One must be clothed with righteousness. Many are called but few are chosen teaches us the necessity of righteousness. You are not righteous by your own action. The righteous action is the death of Jesus on the cross. However, our response to that has to be a righteous response. We are to have a confession of faith, repent of transgressions, and live a new life of devotion and care. In the realm of contemporary society, it is popular to think that you are

right with God regardless of your degree of faith. We tend to skew perception in our own favor. However, Jesus says many are called but few are chosen.

The parable is about our relationship with God. The king represents God. The people rejected God's messengers. This is a very serious insult. They were all invited but they rejected God's invitation. They not only rejected the messengers, they actually rejected God's own Son. Therefore, the kingdom of God will pass from them and pass on to the people that repent and are clothed in righteousness. God's kingdom is portrayed as a celebration. What the religious leaders miss out on is the celebration. They are excluded for mistreating the messengers. The kingdom includes those that were not originally invited. Anyone not clothed in righteousness suffers the same fate as those that failed to repent and live by the rules of God.

The contemporary lesson deals with how the Scripture is applicable to us today. The problem with organized religion has two sides. The abusers are hypocrites – self-righteous, arrogant, and judgmental. The lapsed are those that reject God's invitation. Both are excluded from the kingdom. This past summer, I did a series on organized religion. Each case had someone that claimed to have faith but reject organized religion. They encountered hypocrisy and became lapsed. The religious leaders judged, condemned, and rejected people because of their own self righteous attitudes. They fail to recognize and understand that the condemnation of Jesus does not go against the people that are judged by the institution, the condemnation goes to the religious leaders for not being true to God.

Take an inventory of your life. Take the time now and imagine what heaven might be like. We all have different pictures and none of us have a frame of reference. Imagine the glory of it all. When it comes to heavenly glory, we make assumptions and imagine the best case scenario for ourselves. Jesus knows what we do not know and Jesus said "few are chosen." This means that we need to aim high. In contemporary society we see repeatedly less people that are religious. They do not like organized religion. This is a very important problem. Jesus also had a problem with organized religion. Withdrawing from God's religion drains valuable resources that are necessary to fix the problem and further compounds the problem. When Jesus says that only a few are chosen, we need to take it seriously and be in position where we are robed in righteousness.