The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 May 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The King's Marriage Supper

Matthew 22:1-14

During my years at Bible college, there was a drill that my roommates and I went through every morning: and that was "room inspection." Every morning, our room was inspected by our dorm's hall leaders, to make sure that it was clean and tidy; and if something were not clean enough, the one who was in charge of that particular cleaning job would receive demerits. Now, there were two hoovers in the janitor's closet for our hallway; and these hoovers were donkey's years old. They also had names! Somewhere in bygone years, some wise guy had written the names **"Jezebel"** and **"Delilah"** on them, with a permanent marker. During the first month or so of my freshman year, I occasionally wondered why the hoovers had been named after these two wicked women; but then, one evening, as I was hoovering the room, I found out the reason. As I was hoovering, the bag suddenly detached from the rest of the hoover; and a huge payload of nasty dirt exploded all over my face, and my clothes. (And since I was wearing a pair of white pajamas, the dirt really stood out.) I then understood why the hoover was called "Jezebel"!

So, what's the point of this story? The point is that when I'm reading in the Gospels, and I read about Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees, I often think about that time when that dirt bag exploded in my face. You see, the religious leaders were always trying to trap Jesus in His words; but every time they tried to trap Him, they ended up with thick black "dirt" on their faces. The "dirt" wasn't the "dirt" of *false accusation*; it was the "dirt" of their own wicked words, which had come out of their own filthy hearts. Jesus took their own words, and made them "backfire" all over their pristine exterior. To most people, the Pharisees *looked* holy; but Jesus exposed their wickedness.

In the last couple weeks, I've been preaching through **Matthew 21,** about the time when Jesus was confronted in the Temple by the chief priests and elders. The priests demanded to know where Jesus had gotten the authority to preach and heal; but they were quickly put to shame, when Jesus asked *them* a question that they weren't willing to answer. From that point forward, it was as though a big bag of black dirt kept exploding in their faces, again and again. Jesus began to tell one parable after another; and in these parables, He showed the priests for who they really were. In the first parable, there was **a son** who, when his father commanded him to work in the vineyard, said, "Oh, yes, father! I'll go, sir!"; but he *didn't* go. He quietly slipped off and did his own thing, and disobeyed his father. This was a picture of the Pharisees, who *said* the right things, and put on a good *show* of righteousness; but they were rebels against God, just like everyone else. In the second parable, the Pharisees were pictured as **rebellious fruit farmers**, who decided that their landlord's vineyard should be *their* vineyard; and therefore, they killed the landlord's servants, and the *landlord's own son*, so that they could seize his inheritance. This was a picture of how the religious leaders, at that very moment, were plotting to *kill* the Son of God. Jesus was showing what was in their hearts; and it wasn't pretty.

This morning, we will delve into yet another parable that Jesus told that day; and in this parable, we will read about a gracious invitation that God has given not only to the nation of Israel, but to *all* of us! The title of this message is ***The King's Marriage Supper.***

Read Matthew 22:1-14.

I. The invitation to the guests of honour (vv. 1-3)

In the last couple weeks, we've studied the two "vineyard" parables; and we've seen how these two parables exposed the hypocritical hearts of the religious leaders of Israel. But now, we have come to a different kind of parable—the "marriage supper" parable. In this parable, Jesus isn't speaking merely to the religious leaders: He is speaking to the whole nation of Israel. Also, the backdrop is no longer a vineyard: it is a wedding feast. One thing is still the same, though. Just as in the last parable, this parable has a **father and a son**, who were betrayed by the people who were supposed to be their loyal servants.

So, let's break this down. First of all, please notice how Jesus began this parable. He said, ***"The kingdom of heaven is <u>like</u>."*** This is our clue that we are about to read one of those "Kingdom of Heaven" parables. In the Kingdom of Heaven parables, Jesus told simple stories to illustrate what it will be like between the time of His *first* coming to earth, and His *second* coming. In parable form, He's giving us a glimpse of some of the things that we can expect to see in this present age, as we await for Christ to return and set up His Kingdom.

With that in mind, let's take a look at the two main characters. The main characters are a **king,** and **his son**. And what did the king in this parable do? He sent out an invitation to some special guests, to attend a marriage feast for his son. Now, you'll notice, in **verse 3,** that the king's servants were sent to call those who ***"<u>were</u> <u>bidden</u> to the wedding."*** In the Greek, the tense of the verb "***were bidden"*** indicates that these people had *already* been bidden to this feast sometime in the past. This means that the servants were simply *reminding* the invitees of the invitation that they had already received some time earlier. This is exactly how it worked in the Eastern culture of Jesus' day. A wedding invitation would be sent to the guests long in advance; and then, when the time of the wedding was drawing near, servants would be sent to call the guests to the wedding, and because it was now ready.

So, what does this all mean? Well, the king represents **God the Father**; and the son represents the **Son of God**, the Lord Jesus Christ. The **special guests** who were invited to the wedding represent God's covenant people, **Israel**; and the **wedding** represents the **union of God with His people**—their coming together as one. Just as a husband and wife come together in marriage, never to be separated from each other again, so God had promised Israel that the day is coming when *He* will dwell with them on earth, as their King; and they will never be separated again. That future day of consummation—that **"marriage"**—is the **Kingdom Age**,

when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, will reign over Israel and the world for 1,000 years; and the **wedding feast** is a picture of the **joy and gladness** that God's people will experience during the Kingdom age, as they dwell together in unity with their God.

What, then, does that ***first*** **invitation** represent—that invitation that was sent out long in advance? It represents God's invitation to Israel in the Old Testament Scriptures. Through the Old Testament prophets, God had notified Israel of a future day when He would establish a *New* Covenant with them. The New Covenant includes the promise of the forgiveness of sins; of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their hearts; of the receiving of a *new* heart, which is inclined to righteousness and obedience; and the promise of Israel's dwelling safely in the land during the Kingdom age. We don't have time this morning to look at all these Kingdom prophecies; but I would like us to look at one of the most important prophecies of the Kingdom, in the book of **Jeremiah.**

Read Jeremiah 31:31-37.

Jeremiah 31:31-37 is a very important Scripture, because it foretells of the *New* Covenant that Christ came to establish with Israel. Now, the New Covenant is radically different from the Old Covenant, in every way. Why? For one thing, because the New Covenant was ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ, instead of the blood of animals. The blood of bulls, goats, lambs, and turtledoves never took away sins; but Christ's blood *actually* takes away sins. Also, the New Covenant is *eternal*, and unbreakable. It is eternal because it is based on *Christ's perfect sacrifice,* and not upon *man's* faithfulness to keep the Law. The whole reason God *did away with* the Old Covenant was that Israel *couldn't* keep their end of that covenant!

Now, just like the Old Covenant, the New Covenant was made with **the house of Israel**; and it includes many *material* promises for Israel (particularly, the promises of Israel's dwelling in the Holy Land in peace and prosperity, during the Kingdom age). However, the *spiritual* promises of the New Covenant are far more important; and the spiritual promises apply to both Jews and Gentiles. The main spiritual promise of the New Covenant is the promise of the *new birth*—the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The prophet **Ezekiel** described the new birth in this way: ***"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."*** What does this mean? It means that when a sinner believes on Christ, and becomes a child of God, the Holy Spirit enters that person, and gives him a softness toward God's commandments, *and* the actual *desire and power* to obey them. In his book *Obedience of the Christian Man* in 1528, **William Tyndale** described it this way: "When Christ is preached, and the promises which God hath made in Christ are believed, the Spirit entereth the heart, and looseth the heart, and giveth **lust [desire]** to do the law, and maketh the

law a **lively thing** in the heart." Christian, never forget that any true goodness that has come out of your life is the work of the Holy Spirit! When lost people see you serving and obeying God out of a heart of love, they are forced to consider that what they are seeing is a work of *God* in your life, and not mere self-reformation! *We* cannot clean up our lives; but God *can. We* cannot give ourselves a new heart; but God *can*. If you are saved, God gave you that new heart at the moment you were saved; and with that new heart, God wants you to serve Him. If you have *not* been saved, you *need* that new heart; and God is calling you to salvation!

And so, we see that God's covenant people, Israel, were given an invitation to a marriage feast with their own God and Messiah, centuries before the wedding was to take place; and the wedding truly *was* "at hand" in Jesus' day. It was so near, that the oxen and cattle were killed, so to speak; and all things were ready. All Israel had to do was come to the marriage, and enter the Kingdom. But how did they respond? Let's find out. **(Read Matthew 22:3-6.)**

II. The insulting invitees (vv. 3-6)

An invitation had been sent out to the guests long in advance; and now, the king's servants were calling the guests to the feast, which was just about to start. Incredibly, though, the guests wouldn't respond. *Three* invitations were sent out; yet, they ignored every one of them. The first invitation was the one that is implied in **verse 3**—the one that had been sent out long in advance. The second invitation is the one that is mentioned in the last half of **verse 3**—the one in which the king sent out his servants shortly before the feast, to call the people to come. When the people didn't respond to that invitation, the king sent yet *another* group of servants, to call the people for the *third* time; but the only response that the servants received were lame excuses. Let's see what these excuses were.

Read Luke 14:16-24.

As you can see, this version of the "marriage feast" parable (which Jesus had preached months earlier) isn't exactly the same as the one in **Matthew 22.** One difference is that the *murder* of the King's servants isn't mentioned; but the other difference is that in this version of the parable, the *excuses* that the people gave are mentioned specifically. One man said that he had bought a piece of land, and needed to go and see it. (Really? He bought a piece of land without even looking at it, and *now* he was going to check it out? This story sounds a little

suspicious!) The second man's excuse wasn't any better. This man said that he had bought a pair of oxen, and needed to go and test them. (This is like buying a car without looking under the hood, or even taking it for a test drive.) The third man said that he had ***"married a wife,"*** and therefore couldn't come. (Really? How long had he been married? Since that morning? Or for several months? No answer is given.) One thing is for sure, though: no one cared to go to the wedding feast of the king's son. Jesus said that they ***"made light of it."*** The Greek word for "made light of" is also translated as ***"neglected."*** It simply wasn't important to them.

So, what does *this* mean? This is a picture of how Israel *neglected* the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven, which had been given to them through God's servants. And who *were* these servants? Well, as we have already seen, the first set of servants in this parable represents **the prophets of** old. The second set of servants is a picture of **John the Baptist**, **and his disciples**. John told the people that ***"The kingdom of heaven is at hand,"*** and that they needed to repent, and believe on Jesus; and though there was *some* response to John's message, most of the people remained indifferent. The third set of servants is a picture of **Christ's Apostles**, who *also* pleaded with the people to repent and believe on Jesus. This set of servants even includes **Christ Himself**! (Though Jesus is the King's Son, He humbled Himself, and made Himself the Servant of God and man.) Tragically, though, God's servants were, for the most part, ignored by most of the Jewish people; and some of the Jews (the religious rulers, particularly) *killed* God's servants. First they killed John the Baptist, then the Lord Himself; and all but one of the Apostles were eventually murdered. (Some of the Apostles were murdered by the Roman authorities; but some were murdered by the Jewish authorities.) Even those who were *indifferent* to the murder of the Son of God were, by their silence, complicit with it. Though Israel had every privilege in the world, they turned it down. As the Bible says in **John 1:12,** Jesus ***"came unto his own, and his own received him not."***

Now, before we come down too hard on the Jewish people, let's look at ourselves. Are we any better than they? No, we are not. To this day, people who have been given every opportunity to receive Christ *still* make lame excuses for neglecting God's call to salvation. Many people say, "I'll think about it later; but right now, I'm really busy." Now, don't misunderstand: not everyone is *antagonistic* or *hostile* to the invitation; the problem is that most people simply don't care. At the Great White Throne Judgment, many lost souls will plead that they were not *opposed* to the Gospel: they were just too "busy" to respond. Many people have told me that they will think about receiving Christ when things have "settled down" in their lives--when circumstances have changed, and they have time to think about eternity. Some people are more concerned about going fishing than they are about hearing the words of life. Many people have heard the Gospel enough to realise that if they receive Christ, it would mean that they would be entering into a life of *service* to Christ; and they are not ready for that commitment, because they are too busy building nest eggs, or pursuing careers, or having fun, or building other "castles in the air." My friends, none of these excuses will stand on the judgment day! Jesus said, ***"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."*** Either you are *for* Christ, because you have repented of your sin

and believed on Him; or you are *against* Him, because you have *not* repented and believed on Him. It didn't matter if the guests in this parable had *murdered* the king's messengers, or were simply *indifferent* toward them; either way, they did *not* enter the marriage feast. And so it is with salvation. "Having good intentions" won't get you into the Kingdom. Having a deep respect for your born-again friends or family members won't get you into Heaven. *You must personally receive God's invitation,* by repenting of your sin, and placing your faith in Jesus.

III. The King's indignation against his guests of honour (v. 7)

(Read Matthew 22:7 again.) In the parable of the vineyard, Jesus had asked the *priests and elders* what *they* thought should happen to the rebel farmers that murdered the landlord's son; and they had rightly answered that these men should be "miserably destroyed." Well, a similar situation had now arisen in *this* parable: **the people had murdered the king's servants**. What would happen to *them*? Obviously, they, too, deserved to be destroyed: and they *were* destroyed! The king soon sent his armies to destroy these people, and ***"burn up their city."***

Now, to anyone who knows Jewish history, the meaning of this part of the parable is easy to see. This is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. God gave Israel 40 more years after Christ's resurrection to repent and believe on Him; but when the 40 years was up, God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, and to drive the Jews out of the land. By the way, you'll notice that in the parable, Jesus specifically referred to the armies as ***"his armies."*** Is Jesus saying that the heathen, idol-worshipping Romans that would destroy Jerusalem would be *God's* army? Yes! God has often used wicked nations to *chastise* His own people, Israel, for their sin. For example, God referred to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, as His "servant"—even though he was a wicked man. Fifty years after Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, God allowed *Babylon* to be destroyed by Persia, for *their* wickedness; but He still used the Babylonians, wicked though they were, to punish Israel.

Read Jeremiah 25:7-12.

Folks, God is not mocked. He *will* judge sinners for their sin. For those who reject Christ, there is often fiery judgment in *this* world, just as there was for the Jewish people, in A.D. 70; but far worse than any earthly fire is the *eternal* fire that awaits those who refuse God's offer of salvation. The Bible says that ***"Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*** However, there is *good* news. The same God who judges sin also offers *mercy and pardon*, to those who will humble themselves.

IV. The King's invitation to all (vv. 8-10)

(Read Matthew 22:8-10.) At this point in the parable, something amazing happened: the king opened the wedding invitation to *everyone*—whether they were considered to be "good" people, or "bad" people. In **Luke,** Jesus said that the king sent his servants to call the ***"poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind"*** from the streets of the city, and from the ***"highways and hedges."*** Because the guests of honour had spurned his son, and murdered his servants, the king was now opening the invitation to *everyone.*

So, what does *this* part of the parable mean? Who are the ***"poor, maimed, halt, and blind"*** that were invited to the feast? These people represent the *Gentiles*—the people who did not previously know the God of Israel. The New Covenant, with its offer of the New Birth, is now offered not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. It doesn't matter what your ethnicity is: *you* are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, in the coming 1,000-year Kingdom. It doesn't matter how badly you have sinned against God: God offers you mercy, forgiveness, and eternal life, if you will only take Him at His word, and come to Him. *No one* is excluded: *anyone* who will answer the call to salvation in Christ may enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Read Revelation 22:17.

For 2,000 years now, the call to salvation has been sounded out throughout the highways and hedges of this world. And who is *sounding* the call? Is *God* calling people in an audible voice from Heaven? Is He sending *His angels* to proclaim the message? No! *We, the redeemed of the Lord* must tell them! *We who are saved* are the servants who have been commissioned by our King to go out into the highways and hedges, and "bring them in." Christian, you and I are part of the "bride of Christ"; but the bride's job isn't to just sit around and look beautiful. Remember what we just read in **Revelation 22:17**? Who was calling sinners to "come" and drink of the water of life? The Spirit of God was calling; *but so was the bride*! (That's *us,* brethren!) Christian, before you saved, you were one of the "poor, maimed, halt, and blind" who were invited to the feast; but now you are one of the *servants* who have been commissioned to *call* people to the feast! You are a member of the Bride *and* a member of the servant corps, all rolled up in one. The job of proclaiming the Gospel isn't for some "elite corps" of exceptional Christians: it is for *you.* Will *you* obey Christ, and bring people in?

V. The willfully ignorant intruder (vv. 11-14)

(Read Matthew 22:11-14.) In this last part of the parable, Jesus focused on the one requirement for entering the Kingdom: **the wedding garment.** What is this all about? Well, in the culture of Jesus' day, when nobles and rich men hosted a wedding feast, they would pass

out their own special garments for all their guests to wear: and it was mandatory. You could *not* get into the wedding in your own garment. It didn't matter how nice a suit of clothing you were wearing: if it wasn't the garment that the host had issued, you weren't allowed in.

And that, my friends, is the way it is with salvation. Salvation is offered to everyone; but you cannot come to God on your own terms. To enter God's glorious 1,000-year Kingdom one day (as well as the city of New Jerusalem), you *must* be wearing the "robe of righteousness." Your *own* righteousness will not do, because even your best attempts at righteous living are like ***"filthy rags"*** in God's sight. You must be wearing the *perfect* righteousness of God's Son, Jesus Christ. How do you receive this perfect righteousness? By simply *repenting* (turning from sin) in your heart, and *believing* that the blood that Jesus shed on the cross is sufficient to wash away *all* your sin. When you believe on Christ, and trust in His shed blood, you are given a robe of perfect righteousness; and God accepts you on that basis!

Read Isaiah 61:10.

Read Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-17; 19:6-9.

When the man in Jesus' parable was confronted about his lack of a wedding garment, he was speechless. He had clearly *heard* that he needed this garment; but in his pride, he didn't think he needed it. However, when the King appeared, this man found out very differently! He had mingled among the legitimate guests, and had behaved as though he were one of them; but he was *not* one of them. When the King appeared, this intruder was removed, bound hand and foot, and cast into ***"outer darkness,"*** where there was ***"weeping and gnashing of teeth."***

Need I point out what this represents, folks? It represents religious, but lost people, being cast into hell! Now, in the immediate context of this passage, the man without a garment represents the *unsaved people* who will stand before Christ as the Judgment of the Nations, just after Christ returns to earth. Those who managed to survive through the horrible seven years of the Tribulation period, yet never believed on Christ, will *not* be allowed to enter the 1,000-year Kingdom: they will be cast into hell. However, this man without a garment represents not only the lost people who will be living *at the time of Christ's return*; he represents *all* unbelievers of *all* ages who die without Christ. This man represents *everyone* who tries to get into Heaven without the garment of salvation. Being religious, or belonging to a certain church, won't save you. Growing up in a Christian family won't save you. God will *not* accept you into His Kingdom if you *have not been born again*. *Everyone* in this world is ***"called"*** to salvation; but, as Jesus said at the end of this parable, merely being ***"called"*** is not enough. *Many* are ***"called,"*** but few are ***"chosen."*** The "call" is offered to

everyone; but only those who *answer the call,* and put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, are counted as His "chosen" ones. Are *you* one of His chosen ones? Have *you* been saved?

Conclusion: In **Hebrews 2:3** Paul warned, ***"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"*** If you have not been saved, don't put it off any longer! Don't be like the people in the parable who neglected to answer the king's call, because they were too preoccupied with their own desires. Come to Christ for salvation today! To those of you who are saved, I would say this: **Don't forget why you have been called and chosen**. You have been called and chosen *to serve Christ with your life*, and *to bring forth fruit* for Him! Don't let the shiny trinkets of this world keep you from obeying Christ's command.

In the early days of the church age, *all* believers in *every* walk of life—from Apostles, to pastors, to nobles, to merchants, to peasants, to slaves—considered themselves to be ambassadors for Christ. Whether they lived in huts, or in Nero's palace, Christians everywhere fearlessly witnessed for Christ. *That* is how they turned the world upside down! *That* is why we have the Scriptures in our hands today! In the face of persecution and death, the early Christians willingly gave their lives to tell people about Christ. In contrast, why are we in our modern Western world so ineffective for Christ? Perhaps because we *think* we have too much in this world to lose. Richard Wurmbrandt, the Romanian Jewish pastor who was tortured for 14 years in communist prisons, once said, "What encourages us to preach the Gospel in captive nations is that there, those who become Christians are full of love and zeal. I have never met a single lukewarm Russian Christian. Former young communists and Muslims become exceptional disciples of Christ."[1] Why is this so? Because in the communist and Muslim world, where being a Christian can get you killed, Christians are forced, every day, to "count the cost" of being a Christian: and every day, they must choose, once again, to "die" to self, and live for Christ. Are *you* counting the cost, Christian? Are *you* going into the "highways and hedges"? If not, let Christ revive your heart today!

[1] Richard Wurmbrandt, *Tortured for Christ* (Bartlesville, OK: VOM Books, 2013), p. 80.