

“No Distinctions”

Matthew 22:1 – 14

By: Chris Dilley

Introduction:

This parable is the third and culminating parable of this section in Matthew (21:28 – 22:14). As in the other parables, the characters represent God the Father (king), God the Son (son), the prophets/disciples of Jesus and John? John himself? (Servants), and the religious leaders/Israel (invited guests). The difference in this parable of the wedding feast is that the religious leaders’ (and the Jewish people) persistent, oftentimes violent rejection of Jesus as their Messiah leads to God’s offering of the Kingdom to the Gentiles. In last week’s text (Mt.21:43) we saw a pointed statement of this offering of the Kingdom to the Gentiles, and in the parable of the wedding feast, the offer is officially extended (Mt. 22:8 – 10). The meaning of this parable marks a momentous shift in God’s redemptive plan for the world, and as such, isn’t something we should quickly read over, but rather contemplate deeply: The Kingdom of God is now offered not just to Israel, but to *the world!*

1. Those who reject the invitation of the King invite the wrath of the King (vv. 1 – 7).

A. God prepared His best for Israel (vv. 1 – 4)

The graciousness and patience of God towards Israel is seen in this parable when the king repeatedly invites (3x) the religious leaders (and the nation) to the wedding feast. Israel certainly cannot accuse God of not providing them with chances to repent and believe! In those times, it was custom to send multiple invitations for events due to the detailed planning and travel time that was involved for those attending such an occasion.

III: This is the equivalent to what many engaged couples do today when they send “Save the Date” cards and then formal wedding invitations out to guests that communicate more formally the bride and groom’s desire for the guest’s attendance. The point remains: God called Israel to Himself through belief in Jesus the Messiah, but they repeatedly, willfully, rejected that call. They had a “seat at the table” but refused to occupy their seat due to the hardness of their hearts.

To refuse the invitation of a king would be considered a blatant disregard for his authority, graciousness, and rule. How much *more serious* is the offense when one disregards the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God!

In verse 4, we see that the king has offered his very best animals for meat to his guests at the wedding feast. Jesus is teaching through this parable that God has offered Israel His very best in His Son, and to reject him would be utter folly. The bounty of the wedding feast draws ones attention to the gift of salvation that only Jesus Christ can bring. Adding greater irony to this parable is the fact that Isaiah 62:1 – 5 taught the Israelites that God would rejoice over the nation as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. However, they missed out on this when they rejected Jesus.

B. Israel didn't want God's best (vv. 5 – 6)

In verses 5 – 6, we see that Israel's unbelief was manifested in two distinct ways: The first response to the invitation of the king was *indifference*. Upon hearing the king's invitation, those in this category were not impressed, but chose to go back to their daily business. Imagine the amount of blindness it takes for someone to receive an invitation to such an event and then so easily dismiss it outright. The scariest thing about indifference to Christ is that the individual doesn't see his *utter need for God!* Sadly, this is how many people respond to Christ even today. Many might not speak out against Christianity and many might even agree with some of the basic tenets of the faith, yet they don't see their need for forgiveness and cleansing of their sins. The god of this world (Satan) has blinded the eyes and minds of these unbelievers. Their false sense of joy is anchored in the fleeting pleasures of this world. Perhaps they have never heard the Psalmist proclaim: "*In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" (Ps. 16:11). They neither think nor care about God, and their indifference will take them straight to Hell.

Q: Are you indifferent and apathetic to the things of God this morning? Have you taken God's grace in Christ for granted? Do you understand your deep need for God?

The second response to the king's invitation was *hatred and violence* toward the king's servants, and by extension, toward the king and his son. These individuals were not indifferent to the things of God, but were *vehemently opposed* to them. They hated the king's son, and they acted on that hate. We've seen this in Israel's history as she murdered many of God's prophets, we've seen this with the murder of John the Baptist, we've seen this in the persecution of Jesus' disciples and the church throughout history even until today, but we most vividly see this when the

persistent rejection of Jesus results in his own people handing him over for torture and crucifixion.

Q: Do you hate the king's son this morning? Some of you hate the king's son and want nothing to do with Him. If you hate the king's son, that is, Jesus, you must understand that you have *no cause for hating Him*. This parable alone teaches us that God offers His best to you in His Son Jesus Christ. He has repeatedly pursued you and he invites you to his banquet, but you choose to hate. You choose to not believe. If this is the state of your heart this morning, I pray that even today, you see the treasure God offers you in Jesus!

Secondary Applicaton: Brothers and sisters who have responded to God's gospel call, we too must take heed. If we are not careful, we can also become apathetic and even hostile to the things of God. Remember: The religious leaders and the Jewish people were *so* close to the truth, yet their sin made them blind to it. We must remember to "*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Mt. 3:8) lest we also fall into sin and unbelief as the religious leaders and the Jewish people did.

C. God rightly judged Israel for their unbelief (v. 7)

To reject God's offering of His own Son for our salvation is a rejection worthy of the harshest penalty imaginable. In the parable, to reject the king and his son and to harm his servants is unforgivable. The king will have justice. This verse shows us that the punishment for Israel's rejection of Christ is divine judgment. Some commentators believe that the destruction referred to in this text points to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 at the hands of the Romans. However, other commentators dispute this, arguing that the language Matthew uses describes eschatological judgment. There is no reason that both aspects can't be present because temporal judgment often points to eternal judgment. The theological point is clear: Those who reject God's Son incite God's judgment for their sins.

Application: The sobering reality of this verse is that those who reject the Son of God will be judged for their unbelief. The Jewish people rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and many in our day do as well. Brothers and sisters, many of us don't reject this theological truth. Many of us affirm it. Still, it is possible to have excellent theology, but to reject Jesus in our thoughts, words, and actions. Ask yourself this morning professing believer: Is my life bearing out my beliefs? Am I truly following Jesus and submitting to His Word? Is Jesus the Lord of my life?

2. The King is gracious to extend His invitation to others (vv. 8 – 10).

A. The Kingdom offer is expanded to the Gentiles (vv. 8 – 9)

These verses mark the major turning point of this parable and indeed, of history. The religious leaders and the people of Israel have willfully rejected God's offer of entrance into His Kingdom *through* His Son Jesus. They have killed the messengers of the Kingdom, and (here in Matthew's gospel) they eventually will kill the King Himself. Their unbelief has invited the wrath of God upon their nation. Now, the king chooses to invite others to the marvelous wedding feast of His Son.

The fact that the "*wedding feast is ready*" points to the nearness of the Kingdom of God. In fact, throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus repeats the phrase numerous times: "*Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is **at hand!***" Verse 8 also tells us that those who were originally invited are **not worthy** due to their sustained rejection of God's Son. This statement is huge! Israel has for centuries been God's chosen nation, His chosen Son! However, the rejection of the Messiah shows they are no longer worthy of this designation. The *nation* of Israel is no longer the distinct people of God. Imagine the impact of this truth on the Jewish people of Jesus' day!

Note on Israel: Before we go further, I want to clarify something about Israel. It is true that the Israelites largely rejected Jesus as their Messiah. It is true that because of this rejection, they incurred God's wrath. It is also true that because of this rejection, God the Father is "*taking away*" (Mt.21:43) the Kingdom of God from His once chosen nation. **However**, the gospel is now expanded to ALL nations, and we need to realize that this includes *believing* Israel! Throughout history, a faithful, believing remnant always remained in Israel. So although the Kingdom *calling* has been removed from *national Israel*, those Israelites who repent and believe in Jesus will indeed be saved, and will become part of the new People of God, that chosen nation, that royal priesthood, that Bride of Christ, none other than The New Testament Church.

The reality that the Kingdom of God is for believing Jews *and* Gentiles alike is seen very clearly in Eph. 2:11 – 16 (Read). The Kingdom of God is for everyone who believes in Jesus, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Notice the words that begin verse 9: "**Go therefore.**" One can't help but notice that this command from the king in this parable echoes a certain command we see later in Matthew 28:19: "**Go therefore and make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**" I do not think this is a coincidence in the slightest! When the king commands his servants to go into the "*main roads*" to invite "*as many as they find*" it becomes increasingly clear that the call of the Kingdom isn't only for the Jews, but now also for the Gentiles. The "*main roads*" actually means the roads that lead out of the city. It carries this idea of streaming across the countryside and calling the poor and the outcasts to the Kingdom of God. One is reminded of Acts 1:8: "*...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and*

in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” There is a clear sense that Jerusalem is no longer the primary hub for God’s saving activity.

Application: Realizing that the call of the Kingdom, the call of the gospel is now for all nations, we must ask ourselves **what is our role in this?**

- 1) Just as Christ broke down the dividing walls of hostility between Jew and Gentile, we also need to break down any dividing wall that would hinder our witness to the nations. For some of us, this means putting to death our racism. It would be naïve of us to think that there aren’t many American Christians who struggle with racism today. There are. In some sectors of our country, the roots of this run deep. Speaking personally, my own extended family consists of some very racist people. Whether you were raised in an atmosphere like that, or whether you have produced your own racist viewpoints, no matter where you got them, they need to be put to death!

The reality of this text is that the call of the Gospel is for *all* nations. We need to affirm the bible’s teaching that every man, woman, and child is made in God’s image and is therefore valuable as a human being. This is regardless of socio-economic factors, background, race, etc. **We dare not make distinctions where God has not made distinctions, and we dare not build dividing walls where God has torn them down!**

Furthermore, if you are a believer who struggles with racist prejudice, you need to realize this text teaches that when you sit with Christ at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Heaven, you will be seated at a table that includes people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, without exception. And, you must realize this morning that your seat at that table isn’t yours because you earned it. It isn’t yours because of your skin color. It isn’t yours because you are fundamentally better than anyone else. It is only yours because it is covered in blood, the righteous blood of the Lamb!

III: Over the past month or so in the South, 6 predominantly African-American churches have caught on fire experiencing varying degrees of damage. Currently, three of these churches are under investigation as possible arson fires. It will take some time for investigators to figure out which fires are cases of arson and whether or not they were racially motivated. However, if even *one* of these fires was a racially-motivated arson, that is one fire too many. As I thought about this, I realized that a racially-motivated hate crime, an arson fire at a church is the *exact opposite* of what we see in this text. Not only that, it’s a satanic abomination. Those who have performed these heinous crimes are communicating loud and clear that the church isn’t for people of diverse races. They are saying that the church is only for certain kinds of people. Brothers and sisters, it doesn’t matter what they say because God Himself has declared that the church is for the nations! God Himself has told us that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will be at His Wedding Feast! And nothing will change this reality!

Still, we must realize that many in our country disagree. Their sin has blinded them to the value of all persons made in God's Image. **The question this morning is what do you believe?** Are you on board with God's plan for the nations? Can you see yourself in fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ who are different than you? If not, repent. Pray. Ask God to change your heart! **This is God's Kingdom plan for the entire world and if you have a problem with God's Kingdom plan, then you have a problem with God Himself!**

- 2) Not only do we need to check our hearts for lingering prejudice, but we also need to fulfill our role in the Great Commission. We need to be those who set the example of the Kingdom. In short, we need to reach the nations.

III: I recently attended the SBC with Stephanie, Ryan, and Jay. One major emphasis was the role of the local church in missions. David Platt, President of the IMB was adamant that the Mission Board's role is to *assist* the churches in their mission work. Missions shouldn't be top – down, but bottom – up. This means that missions doesn't only start with the entire local gathering, but with each individual member. One of the desires our Missions Team at Cornerstone has for you is that each of you take part in the work of missions. There are various ways you can do this: You can be a part of a STM, you can pray, you can financially support missions, you can pray and ask God if He might be calling *you* to missions.

Some ways this is currently seen in our congregation: Our college group is going to First Spanish Baptist on July 25 to partner with our brothers and sisters in Christ there to share our faith in Mexicantown, Detroit. Our mission's team to Manitoulin just arrived back. Some of our H.S. students and leaders are on route to Jamaica as we speak! Mission is happening, the question is: are you part of it? It goes without saying (at least it should!) that we should all be sharing our faith with those around us at work, school, family, etc. We must also realize some of us need to broaden our gaze and remember that God's Kingdom work in an international work!

B. The Kingdom Call is for all types of people (v. 10)

The king's servants follow his command and gather from the roads "*all whom they found.*" This emphasizes the fact that the Gospel Call (Kingdom Call) goes out to all people. Furthermore, this verse emphasizes that both "bad and good" were among the people that filled the wedding hall as guests. Again, the emphasis of this verse seems to be reinforcing the main point of verse 9, namely, that all people are invited to accept Christ as Savior. The "bad and good" distinction is not God's distinction here,

but rather a distinction made by the king's servants. We know in reality, that all people are bad! We're sinners. The Gospel Call goes out not to the righteous, but to sinners.

Application: Practically for us, this means that as we share the gospel, we shouldn't think that anyone is either good enough for the Kingdom or too bad for the Kingdom. Many people believe they are good enough for God, but in actuality, their sin separates them from God. Whether they are the morally upright mother of three, or the hardened criminal, the need for forgiveness of sins is the same.

So, like the servants, we are charged with sharing the gospel with all sorts of people. God is the one who will sort out who is truly His. We see this in our final point...

3. The King will not tolerate unprepared guests at His feast (vv. 11 – 14).

Recap: The religious leaders and Israel have rejected God's Son and God has taken the Kingdom away from Israel. God then graciously extended the invitation of His Kingdom through His Son to the Gentiles, that is, *all nations*. Now in the parable, the wedding hall is filled with guest from *all nations*. Yet something is still amiss. There is someone who doesn't belong. There is a man who isn't clothed in the proper garment.

III: My improper attire at a recent wedding reception.

You see, the Call of the Kingdom is offered to the nations, but not everyone who initially responds to that call is actually a follower of Christ. Not everyone who is part of the *visible church* is part of the *invisible church*. Here is what I mean: The bible shows us that not everyone who professes Jesus actually *believes* in him. Remember what Bob said a couple of weeks ago: "*Just because you follow those who follow Jesus, doesn't mean you follow him yourself.*" In the end, Jesus will sort these matters out:

"Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left." – Mt. 25:32-33

A. Self-righteousness won't gain you admittance into the Kingdom (vv. 11 – 12)

You might ask where I see the guest's self-righteousness in this text. I see it in verse 12. When the guest is asked how he gained admittance to the feast without the wedding garment, he was *speechless*. I think you can take this as meaning that he knew he had no right being at the feast, but he went anyway. He was an imposter of sorts, trying to sneak into the party on the basis of his own merits. Perhaps you are

sitting here this morning feeling like this guest? Perhaps you know that you don't belong because you don't believe in Christ. If this describes you this morning, then keep listening...

B. Self-righteousness will send you to Hell (v. 13)

The king has this imposter bound and cast into outer darkness, which is Hell. The punishment here is conscious, eternal, suffering and condemnation. You might think that this is a pretty steep penalty for crashing a party. However, this is a party where self-righteousness and self-reliance won't get you through the door. In other words, you cannot work your way to Heaven. You cannot rely on your "filthy rags" righteousness. This feast isn't just some worldly party or insignificant gathering it is none other than Christ the bridegroom's victorious feast with his blood-bought Bride in Heaven! Those who try to enter Christ's Bride, the Church, based upon their tradition, upbringing, or personal merits, will find their only admittance will be to Hell, because like Israel, they have rejected the King of Kings. However, there is hope. If you are an imposter, you can gain the garment...

C. It is not enough to be called – you must believe (v. 14).

This verse serves as a concise statement that summarizes the theology of the whole parable: The nations are called to repent and believe in Jesus, but only those who have been chosen by God will indeed repent and believe. Only those who wear not their own garments, but the garment of Christ's righteousness will be saved, and will have a seat at the Great Feast! In his commentary on this text, James Montgomery Boice says this: *"If we are clothed in Christ's righteousness, we will be able to stand before God and rejoice in our salvation, but only if we are so clothed. If we are not clothed in Christ's righteousness, we will be speechless before God and will be cast out."*

The question for some of you this morning is: Are you clothed in the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness? The text has shown us, all are called, but not all will be saved. However, *you will be saved today* if you repent of your sins and trust in Christ's death on your behalf and His victorious resurrection. Only then will you be clothed for the feast, only then will you have a seat at the table, next to Christ, for all of eternity. If the Spirit of God has worked in your heart this morning, we will have elders down here in the front who would love to speak with you and share God's Word with you. Please don't hesitate to come.