

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Isaiah 25:1-12**

LORD, you are my God;

I will exalt you and praise your name,  
for in perfect faithfulness  
you have done wonderful things,  
things planned long ago.

<sup>2</sup> You have made the city a heap of rubble,  
the fortified town a ruin,  
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;  
it will never be rebuilt.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore strong peoples will honour you;  
cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

<sup>4</sup> You have been a refuge for the poor,  
a refuge for the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the storm  
and a shade from the heat.

For the breath of the ruthless  
is like a storm driving against a wall

<sup>5</sup> and like the heat of the desert.

You silence the uproar of foreigners;  
as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud,  
so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines.

<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;

<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;

he will remove his people's disgrace

from all the earth.  
 The LORD has spoken.  
<sup>9</sup> In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God;  
 we trusted in him, and he saved us.  
 This is the LORD, we trusted in him;  
 let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

<sup>10</sup> The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain;  
 but Moab will be trampled in their land  
 as straw is trampled down in the manure.

<sup>11</sup> They will stretch out their hands in it,  
 as swimmers stretch out their hands to swim.

God will bring down their pride  
 despite the cleverness of their hands.

<sup>12</sup> He will bring down your high fortified walls  
 and lay them low;  
 he will bring them down to the ground,  
 to the very dust.

## **Matthew 22:1-14**

### **The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

**22** Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

<sup>4</sup> “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

<sup>5</sup> “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. <sup>6</sup> The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The

king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup> “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. <sup>9</sup> So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup> He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

<sup>13</sup> “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

<sup>14</sup> “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

## Sermon: Many are invited but few are chosen (Isaiah 25:1-12 and Matthew 22:1-14)

Please have your **Bibles** open at **Matthew 22:1-14**

You should have a **sermon outline** to take notes if you wish.

Let me **pray** first...

### Intro

#### **Slide 1-Heaven?**

How sure are we that we are going to Heaven?

(pause)

We need to listen attentively to Jesus' parable this morning.

Remember a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Usually, the story **relates to some aspect of the culture** of the time – like farming; agriculture, weddings; feasts; family relationships and so on.

The **idea of the parable** is to:

- Make people think about what the deeper meaning is
- Make people ask who do the people mentioned in the parable relate to -  
**in Jesus' context**
- Make people hearing the parable ask themselves –who is God in the parable? Who is Jesus in the parable? Who am I in this parable? What correction might I have to make?

### Context

So, Jesus tells the parable

See v2

Jesus likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a **King preparing a wedding banquet for His Son**

It's no ordinary wedding – it's a **royal wedding**

Like say - Charles and Diana's wedding – or Harry and Megan's wedding

V3 – The **King sends** out his **servants** to those invited to the wedding – to tell them to **come to the banquet**

From this we can deduce that **those invited** – have already received some sort of **official invitation** (a bit like our **save the date** invitations) and so **they may know the day** – but not the **time** that it starts – and so now the **wedding is about to start**.

But there's a **problem** – at the end of v3 – these **invited guests** refuse to come!

## Slide 2-Context

At this stage we should **identify the characters in the parable**

The King = **God**

The Servants = **God's messengers** – like His prophets

The Son = The Son of God – **Jesus**

The invited guests = the **people of Israel** in Jesus' time

How does the **King react** to the **guests' refusal** to come?

## Grace Offered (Matthew 22:4)

Look at v4 – The **King offers grace** – grace is undeserved favour

### Slide 3-Grace Offered

He could have said – ‘*okay you don’t want to come – that’s fine*’

But no – the **King persists**

He **sends more servants** – to tell the invited guests – the **wedding banquet is all prepared** – everything is ready – all you have to do is turn up

Isn’t that a **picture of what God’s grace is like** –

He is Holy – we are not – we are sinful – but **He persists with us** – He wants a relationship with us – so **He offers grace** – and **sends Jesus** to fix our sins.

**God – like the King – does everything** – including allowing **His Son to die for sins to be forgiven** – and He even **fixes death by raising His Son**. Everything is ready for us – **All we have to do is accept the invite and turn up.**

But – sometimes **God’s grace is despised** – look at vv5-7

### Grace Despised (Matthew 22:5-7)

### Slide 4-Grace Despised

Look at the **excuses** the invited guests come up with

They **paid no attention** and **went off** – v5

Some to do **work in a field** – some to **attend some business**

Worse still – some of the invited guests **mistreated the King’s servants and killed them.**

It’s one thing to ignore the invite – it’s **totally illogical to kill the messengers sent with the invite.**

That's really despising the King's gracious offer – so the King destroys the murderers and their city (v7)

Now remember – in the parable - the King is God – and the invited guests are the people of Israel – and they are not only ignoring God's invite to come and meet His Son – but they are despising that gracious invite – by killing God's messengers – like the prophets – like John the Baptist – and will soon do the same to God's Son – Jesus.

So, like the King in the parable in v7 – God will pass judgment – and He will destroy the murderers and the city.

This is most likely a reference to the future event – 40 years after Jesus – **when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem** – in **70AD**

(pause)

The bottom line is – those **invited guests** who have refused to come and have murdered the King's servants – **don't deserve to come to the wedding banquet**. Likewise, those **people of Israel** – who have killed God's prophets and rejected Jesus – **don't deserve to be part of His Kingdom!**

But the King has more grace to offer – look at vv8-10

**Grace Offered (Matthew 22:8-10)**

**Slide 5-Grace Offered**

The King persists – He sends out the servants again telling them that the original invited guests are underserving – and the servants are to go the street corners – and invite anyone they can find (v9)

In fact, they are to invite – **the bad as well as the good** (v10)

In his grace – which remember is underserved favour – **the King's invite includes everyone** – everyone is now invited.

Again, a **picture** of what **God's grace** is like!

In Jesus' context – it means – the invitation is now to the **outcasts of society** – the **poor**, the **disabled**, the **tax collectors**, **prostitutes**, **shepherds**, **lepers** – **women** (who were treated as second class citizens) – and even to the **non-Jews** – **the Gentiles!**

In our context – it means **EVERYONE** – **is invited to follow Jesus!**

No one is too bad – that they can't **turn back to God** – and follow **Jesus**

And look at the **result of the King's gracious offer** to invite everyone – see the end of v10 – the **wedding hall was filled** with guests!

### Grace Despised (v11-13)

Yet again – there is a **problem** – in v11-13

#### **Slide 6-Grace Despised**

The **King's grace is despised** by one man in v11

The King noticed that **one man was not wearing wedding clothes**.

It seems the **King was so generous** that he **supplied each guest with wedding suits and dresses** – so that the poor people in rags – could come to the wedding dressed like everyone else – so that they didn't look out of place – and **they were on an equal footing with everyone else**.



But this **one man** – had **come to the wedding** with the **wrong motive** – he was perhaps **there just for a feed** – and had **no respect for the King or his son** – and **thought it was okay to turn up how he liked** – and **thumbed his nose at the King's generosity** in providing him beautiful wedding clothes.

The **man came on his own terms** – **not the King's terms**.

When the King asked the man – why he was dressed like that – v12 – **the man was speechless**. He **doesn't have an answer** – **because** - **just like the invited guests who refused to come** – **it's illogical for the man not to put on the wedding clothes**. Why would you not take up the King's kind offer of beautiful clothes – and instead wear your own clothes? **It doesn't make sense – does it?**

And **just as before** – **despising the King's gracious offer** – has **consequences** – see v13 – **the man is thrown out of the wedding banquet** – into the **darkness**. To the **people listening to Jesus tell the parable** – they **would see that** – they **must accept God's offer in sending Jesus – the Messiah** – and **must come to Him** – **with the right attitude** – **humble and repentant** – **on God's terms** – **not their own terms**. **Most of the religious leaders of Israel** **were not prepared to do that** – they **thought they were okay as they were** – **without Jesus!**

### **What The Parable Teaches Us**

#### **Slide 7-parable teaches us**

Now remember **the parable is meant to also relate to us** – **not just the people in Jesus' time**.

There's a **number of things** **we can say**

1. God through Jesus - offers us an invitation **to repent, believe and follow Jesus; there is no logical reason to refuse His invitation;** yet just like in the parable **many do refuse.**

Many people make excuses **today**

For example:

- I'm not good enough
- I'm not that bad
- I'm too bad – I've done some terrible things
- Not now – after I've graduated, after I've married, after I've got a family
- Christians are hypocrites
- I can't understand the Bible
- I'm too old or too stuck in my ways to change
- I'm too busy
- I don't want to hear it – fingers in the ears!

Unfortunately – these are all excuses – they these people regret one day.

Some of the reasons for not coming to Jesus are **not bad in themselves** – **people may be “busy” with things of the** here and now – and **forget about the things of eternity!**

People may choose the “**second best**” thing to do, rather than the “**best**” thing to do.

(pause)

Just like in the parable – when the King invited people to come to His Son – and **everything was ready for the guests** – In the same way, God's invites us

to come to Jesus – and **everything has been prepared for us** – Jesus has died for people's sins to be forgiven and He has rose so people can have eternal life. **All people have to do is to accept the invitation and come!**

## 2. The **parable** also shows **God's grace**.

**Everyone is invited** – good and bad.

No one is too bad that they don't get an invite – **but they have to respond on God's terms not their own terms** (like the man without wedding garments did)

God doesn't tease us by inviting many and choosing few

Included in his invitation are the resources to fulfil the invitation – as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:24 - ***The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.***

With God's invitation – **comes the wedding garment** – people have to be *clothed in Jesus' righteousness* (Galatians 3:27)

It's not enough to accept the invitation – it needs to be a sincere heartfelt acceptance – ***if we love Jesus, we will obey His commands*** (John 14:15). As Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*** (Matthew 5:6).

We must accept what God gives to us – **the righteousness of Jesus** – and not try to make it our own righteousness and be self-righteous, like the religious leaders and this man without wedding clothes!

3. God's invitation, through Jesus is - **an invitation to the Joy of Heaven** –  
In our OT reading from Isaiah 25 - the **picture of what coming to Jesus looks like:**

It's a **feast for ALL peoples** (v6)

And it's **an abundant feast** – aged wine; best of meats and finest wines

It's an occasion when the shroud (veil) that enfolds all peoples/nations – a **shroud of evil and sin that prevents many from seeing God** – will be lifted (v7) – by Jesus' death on the cross

And **death will be swallowed up** (v8) – as the Apostle Paul says “*Death is swallowed up in victory*” by Jesus' resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:54)

And then a picture of Heaven - **The Lord will wipe away every tear from all faces** (v8) – and **there will come a time when people will no longer be troubled by sin and no longer in a place to rebel** (v8)

It will be a **day of rejoicing in His salvation** (v9)

To reject the invitation – or- to come without a proper response – will **mean to miss out on the joy of Heaven** – and will mean being **thrown out into the darkness** (like the man without wedding clothes) where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth** –which is a **picture of Hell** – rather than Heaven

4. We can also learn from the parable - that **the King showed grace and persisted in his invitation** - and just like the servants went to the street corners to invite everyone to the wedding banquet – **we too can go to the**

street corners and invite everyone to follow Jesus – isn't that what Jesus calls us to do in His Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)

### Conclusion (Matthew 22:14 and Revelation 19:6-9)

Jesus concludes his parable with the **telling statement** in **v14**

#### **Slide 8-V14**

***"For many are invited, but few are chosen."***

What does Jesus mean?

In the context of the people Jesus is speaking to – **many of the people of Israel were invited** – **but few were chosen** – because - by their response of rejection and self-righteousness – they had excluded themselves.

For us the parable means: God has provided the feast of the Kingdom; the wedding feast for His Son Jesus – **in Heaven**. The invitation goes far and wide. If we reject it, we miss the party. If we think we can get into the wedding feast relying on our own fitness, we will be thrown out!

Many are invited, but few, show, by their response, that they are chosen!

Back to our original question: ***"How sure are we that we are going to Heaven?"***

The parable is a warning against both **arrogancy and complacency**. **Our faith in Jesus needs to be genuine** – a faith that relies on Jesus not ourselves - and a faith that bears fruit.

The parable is asking – is our **faith** in Jesus **fair dinkum** or not?

(pause)

Just one final thought - remember in the New Testament – the relationship between Jesus and His followers - is **pictured** as a **marriage** – where **Jesus is the Bridegroom** – and His followers – the **Church** – is the **Bride**

So let me finish with these **words from Revelation 19:6-9**

**A picture of the joy that awaits us in Heaven – at the wedding supper of Jesus**

### **Slide 9-Revelation 19:6-8**

*<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:*

*“Hallelujah!*

*For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

*<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad*

*and give him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,*

*and his bride has made herself ready.*

*<sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean,*

*was given her to wear.”*

*(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)*

### **Slide 10-Revelation 19:9**

*<sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

Let's pray

*Heavenly Father thank you that in your grace and through your Son Jesus - we are invited to your son's wedding banquet.*

*Help us to take this invitation seriously – and respond in your terms – not our own – and help us to put on the clothes of righteousness – to put on Jesus' clothes.*

*Through your Spirit – help us to hunger and thirst for righteousness and to love Jesus and obey His commands.*

*Help us to go to the street corners and invite others to follow Jesus. In His Name, we pray. Amen.*