

Accept the Invitation?

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Matthew 22: 1-14

22 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 servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, 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 servants, 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 servants, ‘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 servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good, 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 had no answer. 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 not all are chosen.”

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Have you ever ignored an invitation? Or RSVP'd to something and then didn't go? Maybe you were not feeling well, or you forgot, or had an important conflict come up? What invitation did you ignore and why?
3. A meal in the Greco-Roman world was a ceremony where one's status was affirmed. The elite dined with other elite, Pharisees with other Pharisees, and giving a banquet confirmed the host's elite status. Knowing this

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- a. What did the guests' unwillingness to come signify to the king?
 - b. How does the king's invitation to anyone the servants find in the streets turn this understanding upside down?
4. What does the image of a wedding banquet bring to mind for you?
5. The violent response of the guests (and the king) is difficult to understand when we think of an invitation to a joyful event like a wedding. However, we are often surprised by the passionate response of others to something that would not bother us. Have you ever been surprised by someone's strong feelings or anger? What did you do in response?
6. Many Biblical scholars understand the wedding robe to indicate the ethical expectations – how you need to behave – as a disciple (Colossians 3:12-14). Do you agree? What behaviors are not acceptable for those who say “yes” to the invitation?
7. Do we need to live and behave a certain way to be members of the church?
8. The man without a wedding robe is thrown out into the night, far from the bright lights and celebration of the wedding feast. Weeping and gnashing of teeth can be thought of as bitter tears and anger at the consequences of his bad choice/behavior. Have you ever had an experience of being angry or bitter about a choice that you made that led to being left out or called out for your bad choice/behavior?
9. Verse 14 in the NRSV reads, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” However, looking at the Greek, it could be understood as, “For many are called, but not all are chosen.” How does this change in wording affect the meaning of this saying?
10. Consider reading the two parables prior to this one that are a part of the trio of parables that Jesus uses to respond to the scribes and Pharisees: Matthew 21:28-32 and 21:33-45.
 - a. What is Jesus saying to the religious leaders in each of these two parables?
 - b. What do you think Jesus means by the kingdom of God will be given to a people who produce its fruits?