

Matthew 22:4

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[0 : 0 0] Matthew's Gospel, chapter 22, and let us read again verse 4. Matthew 22, at verse 4, again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell him who are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat wings are killed, and all things are ready to come unto the marriage.

And three simple points from this parable. First of all, the wedding feast itself, and then the invitations in connection with the wedding feast, and then the guests for the wedding feast.

Now, you'll see it's quite interesting, by contrast with our own fashions, that in keeping with the Eastern custom, it's the father of the bridegroom who is preparing the wedding festivities, and who sends out the invitations.

There are certain important additions to the other and closely connected parable, the parable of the great feast. The main extras would be, well, the supper becomes a marriage feast.

More than that, it's a royal wedding, it's for the king's son, and those who decline the invitation are visited with punishment.

[1 : 3 5] Those who accept the invitation are provided by the king with appropriate wedding garments. And like the parable of the great feast, this one focuses on certain aspects of Christ's gospel kingdom.

Let's think, first of all, of the wedding feast. I don't think it's stretching the parable's meaning overmatched to suggest that the relationship of marriage, which in God's plan and purpose is an abiding relationship, brings to our notice the fact that those who receive the gospel offer of salvation will enter a terminate relationship of fellowship and happiness with God.

And once you come to Christ, a lot of comfort in that itself, once you come to Christ, you're Christ forever. He says, those who come to him to be their shepherd, they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Now, it's a feast. It's umptly providing for all who accept the invitation.

And no ordinary feast, it's a king's feast. And therefore no pains are spared to make the thing extra special. Nothing is done with a mean or meagre hand.

[3 : 1 3] But the catering is on a quite lavish scale. It's like nothing that the guests have experienced before. We're reminded of the Old Testament, a prophetic picture of the gospel, it's a feast of fat things.

Of fat things full of marrow. Of wines in the leaves well refined. You couldn't get a better description of the abundance and the amplitude of the gospel feast.

And that's what you have here. In the gospel, there is the promise of abundant pardon. Of never-ending peace with God for the returning sinner.

Life that goes on forever and ever. And instead of the rags of our own righteousness, Christ offers us to clothe, to offer us the clothing of his own perfect righteousness.

To use the language of the psalm, God in the gospel is offering to take us like beggars from a downhill. And to give us a place, and an eternal place, among the children of God.

[4 : 26] Now, we should take notice that the feast is also centered around the person of the king's son. Now, in this respect, it's different from the other feasts.

It's only because of him that these breathtakingly wonderful invitations, breathtakingly wonderful to the kind of, when you think of the kind of people that they will address to, that they are possible at all.

And that a place becomes available at the king's table for all sorts and conditions of men, for the bad and the good, as they are described in verse 10, brought in from the highways.

The bad and the good, they are invited. Those who are, we might say, rascals, and those who are reasonably decent citizens.

Nothing fits anyone for the king's evil. Nothing fits anyone for the experience of the gospel of salvation, except the provision that God has made around the person of his son.

[5 : 33] That agrees, of course, with the entire teaching of the Bible. The outwardly decent, equally with the thoroughly evil, the grossly evil, none of them can be accepted by God, except through Jesus Christ.

Because all have sinned. All are alienated from God. The particular features of our alienation and practice may differ from what they are in another person's case.

But we are all alienated from God, by reason of sin. Whether we are, in terms of what our fathers would call, civil righteousness, reasonably respectable, or on the other hand, shamelessly sinful in our time.

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Not to love God, not to serve God exactly as he requires, makes us unfit for the fellowship of the king.

You don't need to kick violently against the traces of God's authority.

[6 : 49] Many do, but you don't need to do that, to kick violently in order to be sinning against God. perhaps a useful illustration, would be Balaam's ass.

You can imagine the ass might have behaved in a different way, and might have kicked up her heels, and run at full pelt, in a totally different direction from where Balaam wanted it.

But the ass didn't need to do that. She just quietly dug in her heels, didn't say a thing, didn't kick, didn't bite, just stood stuck still, and refused to go an inch further.

And Balaam was just as far from his destination, as the day after had run away with them. So that we sin, as truly and as effectively, and we're as far from God, when we simply refuse in a quiet way, to do his will, as when we violently kick over the traces of his authority.

And so you see that salvation, is possible, only through Christ, and his finished work. There was no way, to the king's table, for anyone outside the palace, but on the strength of an invitation, issued, for the wedding, of the king's time.

[8 : 13] And everybody who came, on the strength of that invitation, including, the worst characters, the bad, as they're called here, to walk the seats, were equally, and abundantly welcome.

That's a, very pleasant thought. That, the worst person imaginable, coming to God, through Christ Jesus, for forgiveness, and eternal life, is equally welcome, to a person, who has lived, a reasonably decent life, who is being converted, to Christ, equally welcome.

So that's how it is, with the, with the gospel. That the wicked, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man, his thoughts, and let him return, unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly, pardon.

Now let's look, at the wedding invitations. Now, we've seen that, those invitations, were extended, in the most generous, possible way.

They were, invitations, that went beyond, those who were, originally did. The first, the first, people, who received the invitations, they made light, of the invitation.

[9 : 35] He stressed, that everything was ready. The dinner was ready, my oxen, and my fat wings, they're killed, all things are ready, come unto the marriage, but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and the renlin, took his servants, and entreated them, spitefully, and slew them.

So that, we can, perhaps, think, that our Lord, is referring, in the first, category of people, who, made light of the invitation, we can think of them, as, in our Lord's mind, referring to the, Jews.

And then we can think, of the others, as referring, perhaps, perhaps we should say, respectable Jews, and maybe, Jews of a generally, presentable character, outwardly.

And then the others, as, referring to the, Africans and sinners, of Jewry, plus, the Gentiles, the whole world, all sorts, and conditions, of men.

Now, friends, that's all very well, talking about the past, but, let's think of ourselves, here tonight, in this building. It comes, to us, again, today, just like that.

[10 : 56] whatever we be, whoever we are, if we're still and saved, we are invited, more than that, it's the king that's speaking, we are commanded, by God, to come, through Jesus Christ, to him, and be forgiven, and be numbered, with his children.

All things are ready, come, to the marriage. There's nothing lacking, on God's part, for the salvation, of sinners, from sin.

No one will ever, be able to say, at the last, that it was God's fault, that he is not saved, that, when he came, the provision, wasn't all that good, it didn't meet his case.

Nobody will ever, be able to say that. God is ready, to receive us, his son is ready, to pardon us, and to cleanse us, from, all our sin.

And, I don't have to remind you, that, there's many a thing, in my life, and many a thing, in your life, that, want to bear, the light of day, sins of heart, and sins of practice, that totally unfit us, as we are, for God's fellowship.

[12 : 13] But you see, we're not, to be looking at our, so to say, torn, and shabby, clothes. We're not, to be saying, yes, it would be marvelous, but I can't, I simply can't, go like this.

There are people, who argue in that way. We, as much as, any others, are bidding, to the wedding. And we're not, to take the position, wait until, I put a patch, on, on, on this hole, in my garment.

Or, wait until, I'll run, and, and, and wash, at the river, and, and, I'll be presentable, for the palace. I'll be able, then, with a clear conscience, without shame, without embarrassment, to sit down, at the king's table.

No, the washing facilities, await us, at the palace. The wedding garment, the only one, that is, suitable, for the occasion, of our rolling fellowship, with God, is there already, Christ's righteousness.

And it's ours, we can say, for the asking. bring forth, the best robes, said the father, in the parables, of the prodigal son, and put it on him.

[13 : 34] And another thing, there's no room, there's no occasion, for waiting. Now is the accepted time.

This is the day of salvation. There's a measure of urgency here. Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, and my fatlings, and killed, are killed, and all things are ready, come, and to the marriage.

And then, go ye therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid, to the marriage. There's urgency in it. We mustn't forget, that the invitations, are also royal invitations.

This is one of the differences, between this parable, and the previous one. In the other case, it was a great feast, and no doubt, he was a very, he was a man of standing, who made the feast, a rich householder.

But you see, he could only invite, his neighbours. And if he refused, well, he had to be content, to arrange, for his feast, Sunday, to come to his feast, apart from them.

[14 : 44] But that's all. You remember, he said, none of those, go out, and compel them, to come in, from the highways, and hedges, because none of those, which were bidden, shall taste of my feast.

That's Luke 14, and 24. But here, the picture, is the picture, of kingly authority, over the people, who were invited. The invitations, are invitations, that suit royalty.

God, says, the apostle Paul, as we go to the gospel, commandeth all men, every way, to repent. It's the sovereign, king of the earth, who issues, these invitations, of mercy.

And that really, stresses the, the condescension, as well as the goodness, and the love of God, in providing salvation, in his son. The result is, that, if people neglect, if people neglect, or if people refuse, that sort of call, coming from the king, coming from God, the great sovereign, of the universe, not only do they, slight, a generous invitation, but they, they, they, they, they, they commit a violation, against their natural, relationship, with God.

So, the refusal, is not merely, distract us, the refusal, is a nut, of disloyalty, and prison, and rebellion. Notice again, that the invitations, are repeated, and pressing.

[16 : 25] Again, he sent out, other servants. What is brought, to the fore here, if you can, stick it into, gospel terms, is a long, staffing of God.

That's brought, into the picture. You know, you know how the prophet, speaking for God, described, how God, had dealt, with his, very unwilling, people, down through the centuries.

He, he said, he was rising up, early, and sending the prophets. Have we not, all of us, heard the gospel, and heard it, many times, and of course, this evening, I'm particularly, addressing, those who, haven't come to the Savior, are not Christians, although, there are lessons, all the way through, for those who are Christians.

Have we not, heard the gospel, many, many times, and, isn't it the case, that if we have refused, to accept Christ, if we have refused, to repent, and believe the gospel, and to put on the robe, of Christ's righteousness, is it not the case, that it's a wonderful thing, it's a marvel, of God's mercy, that tonight, he is still, calling us to come.

Well, the indications, were refused. You'll notice, that there were, different styles, of refusal, but they were all, equally, refusals.

[18 : 06] Here were people, who had, got the indication, that they made light of it. They went their ways, went to his farm, went to his merchandise. The other man, had married a wife, and he couldn't come.

They made light of it. They, didn't, for example, kill, the messengers, who were sent out, as in another parable, the way men, treated God's ministers, and prophets, and apostles, is depicted.

And, what one might, make of that, is this, that, we don't need, to kill, a missionary, as some pagans, have done, for preaching, the gospel, to us.

We don't need, to kill a missionary, we don't need, to make a person, a martyr, to be, refusers, of the gospel. We can have, the gospel offer, coming to us, sounding in our ears, week after week, and yet, be bound, in our hearts, towards, the wrong, and, and sinful, and wayward, courses of life, to our own, worldly, plans, and purposes, and activities.

Plans, into which, God, and, his gospel, and our eternal, salvation, don't enter at all. That, is, refusing the gospel.

[19 : 45] We don't need, to beat the messengers, of the gospel. We don't need, to shut, the door, in their face. We don't need, to burn our bibles, to show, our contempt, for the gospel.

We can attend church, every, Sunday. We can possess, a Bible, we can read it even. But if we do not, come to God, for the, robe of Christ's righteousness, of that Bible of ours, if those church, attendances of ours, do not lead us, to the point, where we, come to Jesus, and, accept this, say, most generous, and gracious, and freely, offered salvation, then, we are, refusing it, as, truly, and as fully, as if we had, made martyrs, of Christ's, servants.

It has been, well said, that, open sin, may kill, its thousands, but, indifference, and neglect, kills, its ten thousands.

what we've got to say tonight, and, friend, I hope that if, you're in a position, where you haven't yet, given, much thought for this, that, at least you'll take this, away with you, and, do give it some thought, that, according to the teaching, of our Lord here, as I see it, many will find themselves, shut out forever, from God's fellowship, maybe you've been, promising yourself, so I wonder if not, I mean, we all do, been promising yourself, you know, a happy, ending to your days, and that you'll enter heaven, and a very laudable desire, that is, but, what I make of our Lord's teaching, here is, that many will find themselves, shut out, from God's, fellowship, and presence, in the last day, out, in outer darkness, that's his own language, not, so much, because they have, flagrantly, and violently, broken the ten commandments, as because, they made light, of the truth, of the gospel, allow me to ask you, are you tonight, making light, of the truth, of the gospel, let us search our hearts, and, make certain, by the grace of God, and he's so willing, to help, that, is that, state of mind, is ours, it won't continue, to be ours, how much longer, friend, if, if that is your, position, allow me to ask, how much longer, have you got, to accept the gospel, how many more Sundays, are you going to come to church, and not, receive Christ, how often, are you going to go home, with your conscience, burdened, and yet, not come to the Savior, and, yet, not come to the Savior,

I haven't, and you haven't, got time, on our side, remember, our Lord, says, that, the time, is coming, when the door, will be shut, the door, in the last day, will be shut, against those, who have rejected Christ, but more than that, you can get in this life, the door of opportunity, being shut, we don't need to be, we don't need to be, morbid, we don't need to be, rubbing it in, in an illegitimate way, just to, to say, that, that we can go home, tonight, and that's the end, the last opportunity, will get, it's been true, of many a person, you can go home, tonight, alright, you're feeling fit, you're feeling fine, and thank God, for that, but, you can go home, tonight, and that's your, last opportunity, the door, can be shut, the door of opportunity, can be shut, and look at the, the addresses, to us as individuals, as many, as you shall find, there's a, there's a, it's sort of running along, the individuals, as many individuals, as you shall find, get them to come in, and we are addressed, as individuals,

[24 : 27] I think at this point, it's, it's permitted to say, never mind, let me, at this point, never mind my neighbour, what my neighbour is doing, what my friend is doing, what my pal is doing, what my wife, or my husband is doing, that may be important, in its own place, and, and, we should all be praying, for one another, that we may be converted, but, when it comes to the bit, of being saved, it's, it's as many individuals, as, are found, who have to reckon, with the responsibility, of responding, to the invitation, to come to the wedding, it's as individuals, that we must reach, a decision, on this matter, so I simply say again, that the door of opportunity, will not stand open, forever, now finally, the wedding garment itself, we're just focusing, on, certain features, not many, but, one or two features, of the parables teaching, and here is, quite clearly, a very prominent, and, very important, item, of the teaching, from this parable, you see, what our Lord, is saying is that, it's not simply, the response, to come into the palace, on the invitation, that got the people ready, you know, for being in the, banqueting hall, the people, had to come of course,

I mean, if they hadn't come in, there was no question, of the banqueting hall, in any case, but, people, were acceptable, at the king's table, only, if they were dressed, in the wedding garment, provided, and that, there we've got, a pictorial, description, of the, of the last day, of the day of judgment, the day, when, Christ's people, will, be brought, into eternal glory, and when equally, all others, will be shut, out, into, outer darkness, where they shall be, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, who says that, who is it, that's saying that, to us, it's the Lord, Jesus Christ, it's himself, we've got to deal, with himself, he says that, so that it shall be, notice, notice that, those who have, neglected, the gospel offer, and who have, tried to appear, before God, in garments, that, other than those, of the,

Christ's, righteousness, because that's, what it's pointed to, equally, with the violent, rejecters, of the gospel, murderers, of the martyrs, will be shut, out, in outer darkness, it was a, customary thing, in those days, at least, among eastern nations, to provide, changes of, clothing, of raiment, as a mark of favor, towards people, we can think of, Joseph's reception, of the, his father, Jacob, and the brothers, when they came down, the very least, he felt he could do, was to, get them washed, and changed, and give them, nicely, a nice new clothing, and the gospel, speaks about, a road, which God, has provided, for each, who enters, his spiritual, kingdom, at his call, think of, how Isaiah, 61, hints at this, I will greatly, rejoice in the Lord, my soul, shall be joyful, in my God, for he hath clothed, me, with the garments, of salvation, he hath covered, me with the robe, of righteousness, as a bridegroom, decked himself, with ornaments, and the bride, adorned herself, with jewels, to God, who cannot look, upon sin, sends his messengers, in every generation, sends his messengers, to invite, even the worst of sinners, to come to him, and to come, just as they are, where the message, finds them,

Jesus, the king's son, translate that, into gospel terms, what the parable says, has brought, a righteousness, which may be given, as a garment, to those, who seek, the king's favor, and it's a robe, that's, entirely suitable, for, a royal, wedding garment, and it, amply covers, the, person, who has been up, to now, a clad, in, tattered, and disheveled, garments, which belong, to their previous, existence, but you see, a man, they assembled guests, in the, buckwheeling hall, when the king, came in, to see the guests, there was, found a man, who had no, wedding garment on, now quite clearly, his, conduct, in not, putting on the garment, was, inexcusable, I mean, he didn't have to, obtain it himself, he didn't have to, go out and buy it, the wedding garment, was provided there, at no cost, to himself, and you know, in some ways, what this man, did or did not do, was a greater, insult to the king, than, the open refusal, of those, who wouldn't come, to the banquet, in the first place,

I wonder, if I'm talking, to anybody, who's been going, to church, maybe for a, fair bit, and, perhaps, were inclined, sometimes, to, be, a bit critical, of those people, who never go, to church at all, but is it the case, friend, would you allow me, to ask you, that you come, to church, but you're not, wearing, not yet, the robe, of Christ's righteousness, you've neglected, you've turned away, from it, you're coming, to church, well thank God, for people coming, to church, but can you see, that, can you see, that, that, that, that it's a, greater insult, and a very real sense, to be, among the guests, with power of three, to going into the wedding, refusing, the garment, that the king has given, in a sense, it's a, it's a worse thing, more open, to criticism, than the behaviour, of those, who never come, to church at all, the punishment, was just, bind him, hand and foot, and cast him, into outer darkness, there shall be, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, in other words, in the parable, it meant, he was put back, out onto the street, the dark street, from where he came, come, out of the, well lit, bunk, out of the, well lit palace, and in spiritual terms, it means, that if you and I, reject Christ, we're offering, the greatest possible, insult to heaven, and in the end of the day,

[31 : 45] Jesus says it, we shall be, in outer darkness, and your, agony, your, your, pain, in outer darkness, will be, all the greater, that you belong, to a Christian congregation, that you often, heard the gospel, you heard it, pressed upon you, you, you heard God, through his messengers, asking you to take, this robe of Christ's, righteousness, and you, pointedly, ignored, the invitation, you, offered an insult, to the king, so this man, represents those, who come within, the kingdom of God, in the, you know, in the profession, of friendship, because the, the man comes in, the king comes in, and he addresses him, as friend, so I suppose, the significance of that, is that, here we're not dealing, with people outside, the church of Christ, we're dealing with people, inside the church of Christ, but you see, in heart, and in action, this man was in conflict, with the whole purpose, of his coming in, to the palace, and that's the way it is, with those, who reject, the salvation, that is, in Christ Jesus, well friends, how is it, with ourselves, we come, to the house of God, we, take up, a certain, kind of, friendship, of professed, friendship, to the gospel, and maybe, in a sense, although we're not, converted, maybe, in a sense, we would be afraid, to be, without that, closeness, such as it is, to the gospel, we wouldn't like, we would be afraid, to be away from it, for, for what we might miss, well, of course, of course, your, professed friendship, here you are tonight, here am I, your professed friendship, may be perfectly genuine, you may be trusting, in the righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, you may have, humbly and thankfully, accepted, the salvation, that is in Christ Jesus, well, all is well then, don't, you have no fears, for all eternity, but are we like that, let us make sure, that we really, are trusting, in Christ's righteousness, with no, eye at all, for our own, because only, such reliance, upon the merits, of Jesus, will ever ensure, us a place, among the guests, in heaven, once or twice tonight,

I stress the fact, that the person, that is speaking, is the savior himself, who died, for sinners, on the cross, take him, as your guide, ease the way, don't let any other, consideration, put you off, because without Christ, we are on an, uncharted, route, to disaster, bring, Benghazi, in Libya, is an interesting, place, for one thing, my friend, there at the back, Colin Morrison, was stationed there, during the war, and, I have a daughter, who lives here, and it's a very, enchanting, Mediterranean, town, it's also, a sad place, when I was, overseeing Jane, a few years ago,

I visited, one of the, the world war two, military cemeteries, in Benghazi, a vast place, charming surroundings, beautifully, kept, really, but row, upon row, upon row, of white, crosses, and each of them, commemorating, the, death, in war, of an allied, serviceman, large number, of them, Scottish boys, I went over, every single cross, in the, cemetery, and a very, considerable number, of them, were boys, from the highlands, but one of the, saddest, reminiscences, wartime, reminiscences, from Benghazi, is about, you probably, heard the story, it's, it's quite well known, was about, an allied bomber, called, called, the Lady Begoat, B-24, which in, 1943, had gone, quite inexplicably, missing, and in 1960, 17 years later, an oil exploration, crew, came in the wreckage, of this,

B-24, deep, in the Libyan desert, now, the plane, had left, her base, near Benghazi, in 1943, on a combat mission, to Naples, in Italy, and, coming back, as they were, nearing the African coast, they broke the, radio silence, to, check, the planes, heading, with the home base, and that was, the last they heard, of, the crew, or of the plane, they had assumed, the people at the home base, they had assumed, that, the, the, Lady Begoat, had, ran out of fuel, over the Med, and had crashed in the Med, the real explanation, was different, as they were crossing, the Mediterranean, from Italy, the weather was not good, and the pilot, climbed, above the, overcast, you know, to get, so that his navigator, would get sightings, directly from, the stars, now the navigator, as he made his sightings, he calculated, and he logged the fact, that they were a long way, past where they should have been, at Benghazi, and the automatic direction, finder, itself, the needle indicated, that they'd passed, their base, long before, but the pilots, were so sure, that they were still, far from base, and, they went on, disregarding, the navigators, position reports, they thought, the sextant, was faulty, they thought, that the navigator, had made an error, in his calculations, what they didn't realize, was this, that when they climbed, to the higher altitude, to get over the clouds, they ran, into, an extremely, powerful, tailwind, that sent them, hurtling, past their, base, a long time, ahead of schedule, well, of course, there was the ADF needle,

I, why didn't they guard it, well, you see, they'd heard that, the enemy, were sending out, false signals, to lure planes, to their destruction, so, they ignored it, and, deep in the, Libyan desert, one of the most, inhospitable places, on earth, they parachuted, to earth, and, despite, heroic efforts, to reach the coast, they perished, and their bones, were found, not so far, from, Lady Begoat, in other words, the, external, standard, of reference, that would have, brought them, safely, to their base, was ignored, if a sad story, one of many, associated, with, the war, in North Africa, but that's the point, that I would make tonight, listen, the, pay regard, to the external, standard, of reference, who is it, that says, that if I don't, come to Jesus, and put on, the robe of righteousness,

[40 : 16] I shall spend, eternity, in outer darkness, who is it, who is it, that says it, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one, whose memory, we were, observing today, who died, on Calvary's cross, the curse of death, of the cross, for sinners, let us, be guided, by him who says, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man, cometh unto the Father, but, by me, may the Lord bless, this is why, let's pray, Lord, we thank thee, for the, faithful teaching, of, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and put into, parabolic form, where we can, understand it, all the more readily, we pray thee, Lord, that we may know, our need of our Saviour, convince us, of our sin, and misery, and grant, Lord, that we may hear, gladly, this great, gospel announcement, that thou hast prepared, a wedding feast, in the gospel, for thy son, that there is ample, provision, for, sinners of mankind, being forgiven, and reinstated, to thy friendship, and fellowship, and numbered, a man, thine own family, grant,

O Lord, that we may, see, that the invitation, extends, to, the, requirement, that we put on, the wedding garment, provided, before we go into, the banqueting hall, that we receive, the righteousness, of Jesus Christ, to cover, our own, spiritual, and moral, ugliness, and defilement, and unfitness, to go into, the king's presence.