

SESSION 1: THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 22:1-14

QUESTIONS

1. You will recall from the parable that many people invited initially chose not to accept the invitation to the feast. God calls us today to be a part of His Kingdom. What do you think keeps people from accepting God's invitation, despite His desire for everyone to accept it?
2. What does the garment described by our Chief Apostle (the garment of grace, of humility, of love for God, and of love for our neighbor) look like in real life? How would one put on the "garment" mentioned?
3. What does the verse "*Many are called but few are chosen*" (Matthew 22:14) mean to you? Who does the choosing? *If we are truly wearing the garment (grace, humility, love for God, and for our neighbor), then judgment goes away and we see our true responsibility, which is to love.*
4. Accepting the invitation in the parable, equates with receiving the sacraments. But putting on the garment is a step more; it is becoming and living as a disciple of Christ. When did you decide that you wanted to put on the "garment"? How difficult is it to keep the garment on?
5. What things have stood (or stand) in your way of drawing close/closer to God?
6. The Chief Apostle recently said, "Don't ask when the Lord is coming, but why He is coming." The Kingdom is and will come. What are our responsibilities as citizens of the present Kingdom? How will that prepare us for the Kingdom that will come (the 1000 year Kingdom of Peace)?

[illegible]

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

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Today we'll be discussing fellowship in the Kingdom. The parable of the wedding banquet is an excellent way of doing this.

Jesus told the parable of the wedding banquet to give an image of God's invitation to fellowship with us. His wish is that we gain nearness to the Triune God which can only begin when we believe two things: that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and that through His victory over sin and death we can have present and eternal fellowship with Him.

This parable shouldn't be confused as a reference to the marriage feast in heaven which will occur after the return of Christ. Jesus' intention was to illustrate His desire for followers to accept His call. Before we delve into this any further, I invite you to pause and read this parable in Matthew 22:1-14.

Jesus describes a king who sends messengers to invite a specific group of people to a feast. These people refuse, some making light of the offer relative to other more pressing engagements in their lives while others are angered by the invitation and do violence to the messengers. The king responds very harshly to the murderers. He then sends his messengers again to invite people indiscriminately. Verse 10 reads, So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. Many respond and now the hall is filled with guests. But there is more to this parable. As was the custom of that time, every guest was given a garment to put on. Of those in attendance, one person in particular stands out. The king notices him because he has not put on his garment.

The king demands an explanation and the man has no response. Once again the king deals harshly, having him bound and thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This description is also used by Jesus in other teachings to describe the judgment scene.

We could address many aspects of this story, but we will focus on two concepts directly applicable to our lives and decisions today. First, let's talk about the importance of heeding the call to the feast, the present Kingdom. This call comes from a loving God through His Son, and it's an offer of eternal life to all mankind - both bad and good. This means whether your past is good or not, you still receive an invitation. It's up to you to decide whether to accept it or not. Many things could keep us from accepting the invitation, but ultimately, they all stem from the same condition; we don't sufficiently value the offer of eternal life.

Now here's the second point I mentioned that makes this parable applicable to our lives. Accepting the invitation brings us closer to God, but He ultimately expects something more than our partaking of the sacraments and attending services. In the same way that God expected the man to wear the proper attire to remain in the feast, God expects us to put on the garment of salvation to remain with Him in fellowship eternally. We can do this by applying the teachings of Christ to our lives. Our Chief Apostle describes the garment in this way:

It is a garment of:

grace, humility, love for God, and love for our neighbor.

We need to put on this metaphorical garment to live as true followers of Christ. Ok, we've accepted God's invitation to commune with Him at church, we've shown up and we've listened to the service. Remaining in true fellowship with God means taking the next step and striving to become more and more like Jesus.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

The King

Only the king noticed that the man didn't have on a wedding garment. It could be that we want to decide who is worthy (sometimes even of receiving testimony, i.e., an invitation). Perhaps we feel people who act in certain ways or choose certain lifestyles are not invited by God and not worthy of our love.

Let's make the invitation on our church signs ("All are Welcome") a living reality in our congregation, love everyone, and let God decide who is appropriately dressed. After all, the Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19).

Attributes of the garment

Grace: Matthew 18:21-25; Luke 18:8-9

Humility: 1 Peter 5:5; Luke 14:11; Luke 19:9-14

Love for God: Matthew 22:37-38

Love for our neighbor: Matthew 22:39