

Responding To God's Invitation

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

There once was a king. An exciting day was approaching for him. His son was getting married. You can imagine what a great day this would be for the king. He wanted to celebrate and he wanted others to celebrate with him. So he planned a party, a great feast. He issued invitations to the seeming worthies of his land. But a strange thing occurred. Those whom he invited did not want to come. Many simply ignored the invitations, going on about their business. Some got mad at the messengers and killed them. The king, becoming angry with these subjects, sent his army to destroy them. However, he still wanted to celebrate his son's wedding. He sent his messengers to those who would seem unworthy. They went everywhere, they found good people and bad people, inviting everyone. The day of the feast arrived and the banquet hall was filled. Yet again, a strange thing occurred. One person came to the feast, but did not dress appropriately. When the king entered the hall and saw this man, he had him bound and cast out.

By now, I am sure you realize I did not make up this story. This is Jesus' story in **Matthew 22:1-14**. However, as with all of Jesus' stories, this story is not about the actual events related in it. This story is about us. We are characters in this drama. But which characters? We are not the king, he is God, the Father. We are not the prince, he is Jesus, the Christ. We are the ones who respond to the invitation. How will we respond?

Discussion:

- I. Are we ignoring it?
 - A. In **Matthew 22:5**, when the king's servant gave invitations, many people paid no attention. They had their own affairs to attend to and simply did not place importance on the king's invitation.
 - B. Are you ignoring the king's invitation? I know you are busy. You have work to do, family to deal with, things to acquire and take care of. You have your own fun to be had. You have the desires of your heart to follow. God's invitation may seem unimportant. After all, who cares about "pie in the sky in the great by and by" when there is so much dessert to be had here and now?
 - C. Or perhaps you are not ignoring it completely, but you want to take care of what is important to you first. Then later you will attend the feast of the Lord.
 - D. But do you really want to ignore the invitation of God? I am not sure you do. After we notice the second response, you will learn what is at stake if you ignore this invitation.
- II. Are we attacking it?
 - A. In **Matthew 22:6**, there were some who paid a great deal of attention to the king's invitation. Amazingly, they became angry. How anyone can become angry about being invited to a feast, I will never know. But they did. They abused the messengers and even killed them.
 - B. Are you attacking the king's invitation? Do you hate those who proclaim the gospel? Are you mocking those who give God's invitation? Do you contradict God's message with teaching that is not in the Bible? Are you angered by the commands in God's invitation? Do you lash out at those who offer the gospel invitation to you, whether they are your parents, your spouse, your friends, your co-workers, etc.? Do you walk out of a service like this one berating those who have participated so you can justify your lack of obedience?
 - C. If you do any of these things, you are the characters who killed the king's servants. But, is your anger worth it? Does your vehemence accomplish anything for you? Does your attack free you from the responsibility to accept His invitation? It does not.
 - D. **Matthew 22:7** demonstrates this. Those who ignore or attack the invitation will be judged. The King will destroy you. The important thing to understand is that when you do not accept the invitation of the King, you are not just missing out on the blessing of His benevolence. You are choosing to receive His wrath. **II Thessalonians 1:5-10** demonstrates what will happen to those who do not accept the Lord's invitation: flaming fire, affliction, retribution, eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord. Your choice is not between doing your own thing and doing God's. Your choice is between blessing and cursing, life and death, eternal glory and eternal torment. What choice are you making?

III. Are we faking it?

- A. In **Matthew 22:11-12**, we find a man who has come to the feast, but does not care about the wedding. He is not sharing in the king's celebration. He thought he could fake it. He wants to eat, but he doesn't want to do what is expected of him. Like the ones who simply ignored the invitation, he is still striving after what is important to himself and not striving to honor the king.
- B. Are you faking it? Are you trying to appear as though you have accepted the invitation, but have not allowed it to change your life? Do you "come to church", but not worship in spirit and truth? Do you hear the sermons, but not apply the teaching? Did you get baptized, but are not walking in newness of life? Do you get upset when preachers, elders and teachers say that just attending is not enough? Do you get tired of hearing about how you need to improve your Bible study, prayer and time with brethren? Do you get defensive when people suggest you ought to attend the worship on Sunday night, the class on Wednesday, our Gospel meeting or a singing? Do you find yourself thinking, "Hey, I come to church, what else do you expect from me?"
- C. If this is you, you need to examine your life. You are the man who came to the feast but did not dress in wedding clothes. You obviously want the blessing of God's mercy and grace, but are you willing to do what God expects of you? I fear, at times, that we spend so much time talking about and teaching on baptism that we can get complacent. "After all," we may think, "I have been baptized. I accepted the invitation. I am better than those who ignored or attacked God's invitation. I must be saved." Do you remember the great commission in **Matthew 28:18-20**? Jesus commanded His apostles to make disciples. How? Simply by baptizing them? No. Coming to the feast does not make one a disciple. Rather, coming to the feast because you have accepted the message and been changed by it. This man heard the invitation, accepted the invitation, but did not allow the invitation to change him. Is this your story?
- D. Notice the end result of this attitude. In **Matthew 22:13**, this faker was bound and cast out. He was thrown into outer darkness, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. His end was not better than those who ignored or attacked the invitation. Do not be this man.

IV. Are we changed by the invitation?

- A. According to **Matthew 22:10**, the king's slaves went to the highways, inviting both good and evil. These accepted the invitation and were changed by it. When invited, these people were not prepared for a wedding feast. However, they changed. They did not come to receive benevolence from the king, but to honor the king. They came to celebrate a wedding.
- B. God has invited you into His kingdom. Do you realize what that invitation represents? You and I are sinners (**Romans 3:9-18, 23**). We deserve nothing more than the judgment that we read about in **Matthew 22:7**. Instead, God has offered us great blessing, mercy and grace. But the invitation expects something of us. God will not give us mercy if we do not allow His offer to change us. We should be so humbled by His mercy and love, that we would do anything for Him, making Him first in our lives. What is important to Him should be important to us. His purposes should become ours. Our lives should be completely bound up in His will.
- C. The disciple of Christ, one changed by the invitation, is described in **Matthew 10:37-39**. To this disciple there is nothing more important than Jesus. There is no one more loved than Christ. There is nothing he will not suffer to serve God. There is no possession he will not sacrifice to gain eternity. He will even count his life as lost in order to serve God. No friend or family member, no possession or material thing, no pleasure or fun will stand between the one who has been changed by the invitation and glorifying God.
- D. The apostle Paul, in stunning parallel to this parable, received his invitation on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9**). He did not ignore it, he did not attack it, he did not fake it. He was changed by it. This one who had been attacking the Way of God, became its most ardent defender and teacher. His changed life is described in **Philippians 3:2-11**. He counted all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of this invitation. How much do you value God's invitation?

Conclusion:

Your story is in this parable. But, only you know whether you have ignored the invitation, attacked the invitation, faked an acceptance or truly been changed by God's invitation of mercy. I urge you to examine your life and if you have not done so, put on your wedding garments and join us in the feast.