**October 6th 2024 Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Matthew 22:1-14** 0740

**Theme: The Bridegroom Calls Men.**

May the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus ever be shed upon you all in great measure. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: Interpretation and application of Scripture has long been a point of controversy in the Christian church. Many say that Scripture must be taken figuratively. Thus every word of Scripture, every historical account must be interpreted as having a meaning or application far different from what the words actually say. For example they would take the story of man’s fall into sin, saying that it is not an actual historical account of what happened in the beginning, but rather a representation of mankind’s plight of corruption. It is all figurative. One thing standing for and symbolizing something else. Others claim that all of Scripture must be taken literally, that there is no figurative speech in all of Scripture. For example they would take the passage from Isaiah which says: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them…And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” (Is. 11:6, 8-9)* They take this passage and say that on earth this will actually take place. The lions and wolves will not kill or hurt the lambs, children can play with dangerous snakes and not be harmed. But can this ever happen? Indeed it will not, for the corruption of the earth remains until the last day. Rather the context of this verse shows that when Christ comes He would sow the seed of the Gospel which will bring many to faith, and those will inherit the kingdom of God and will dwell in peace and safety forever. Nothing shall hurt or harm the saints in heaven. The language of Isaiah is figurative, using earthly language to describe heavenly things.

More than any other Scripture, with the exception of Revelation and Daniel, the parables of Christ are misinterpreted and misapplied, being taught as literal, or having a teaching drawn from them which were not the intent of the parable. One of the most corrupted and mutilated parables which Jesus spoke is our text for today. As we study this parable it is imperative to keep a few things in mind. First, that when interpreting any Scripture, especially difficult passages, we must let Scripture interpret itself. Not adding our own thoughts, but letting God speak for Himself. Second, we must remember not to derive a teaching from the parable which Christ did not intend. Rather we must find what His intent was for the parable and learn that certain lesson. And third, we must remember a parable by definition is figurative. It is a story told in earthly language describing something heavenly. It is for this reason that most of Jesus’ parables begin with Him saying: *“the kingdom of heaven is like unto..”* Thus comparing heaven and God’s kingdom with events on earth which reflect heavenly truths. Therefore, as we learn the parable of today’s text we must lay aside our own reason and our so-called wisdom and bow the knee to our Savior and allow Him to teach us of the kingdom of heaven. Humbling ourselves in this manner will bring to us a much needed lesson from our Savior. He will open to us the mysteries of God’s Kingdom and reveal to our eyes things which would otherwise be impossible for us to understand. With these things in mind we will study the parable of today’s text and hear of the Bridegroom’s call to men. Our text for today is found in the twenty second chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at verse one.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most merciful and loving Savior, Thou Teacher of sinful and darkened souls, we implore Thee to open our ears to hear the truth which Thou dost teach, and to open our hearts to receive it in faith. Help us to learn that as the Bridegroom of the Church Thou dost call and implore all men to come unto thee through the saving message of the Gospel. Teach us that many men have rejected Thine invitation to come unto the wedding, thinking that there are more important things in this world. They are counted unworthy of attending the wedding Thou hast prepared for them. Teach us also that those men who are bidden to the wedding and receive the invitation, whether good or bad, do not come because of their earthly status or so-called good deeds, but because they have on the wedding garment which Thou hast given them through Thy death on the cross for their sins. Keep us in the true faith unto the end that when we appear at the wedding we have on the garment of Christ’s righteousness and are received as guests to the wedding of Christ, rejoicing forevermore in His love toward us. We ask all these things in Thy name. Amen.

Guided by the Spirit of God let us learn first that the Bridegroom calls men:

1. **To His wedding.** We read verses one through three of our text: **Read verses here.** The first few verses of our text are full of figurative language intended to make the Jews to whom He was speaking think of heavenly things. First it is a king who prepares this marriage for His Son. This is a reference to God the Father and God the Son. But what marriage is spoken of here? The marriage of Christ to His bride, the Church. The true believers will be united with Christ at the last day in the same way as a husband is united with his wife on their wedding day. Paul tells the Corinthian church: *“I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2)* Paul was desirous that every member of the Corinthian congregation remain in the true faith so that they would be a part of the bride of Christ. He wanted them to be presented to Christ as a part of the invisible Church made up of true believers. Thus the Father has prepared a marriage for His Son to be wed to the Church.

In verse three the Father sends out the servants to call them that were bidden. Here is one of the places where misinterpretation takes place. Many use this passage to say that God the Father has only bidden some people to the wedding, that God has not sent out His invitation to all people. Thus they draw from this one verse that God only works to convert those whom He has thus chosen. They use this verse to mutilate the doctrine of election by grace. They say that God has only chosen some to come to the wedding, He has at the same time chosen some to not come to the wedding. This however contradicts many other passages of Scripture, such as: *“(God) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:4)* God greatly desires to save all people and sends His invitation to all, as we will see shortly. The meaning of our text is those that were bidden first represent the Jewish race in general. The children of Israel were given the promises of the Gospel and God chose them as His special people. Unto them were the servants sent, that is, the Prophets to preach and teach the Word of God unto them. This is not to say that the Gospel in the Old Testament was meant only for the Hebrews, but that they were chosen to be the bearers of His name and had His Word and guidance in their midst. They knew and were taught at all times of God’s Word and will, they were given the invitation to the wedding and when it came time for the wedding they were bidden. Yet the Jewish race, though bidden and invited, did not come to the wedding. Therefore though the bridegroom calls men to the wedding:

1. **The unworthy refuse.** We read verses three through eight of our text: **read verses here.** Though this portion of the parable speaks directly about the Jews who rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it also applies to any who reject His Gospel invitation. Our God, in the parable, sends out three different sets of servants to bring into the wedding all men. But some simply do not pay any attention to them, some think that it is not that important, and some even persecute and kill those who are sent. This is the very condition which the Israelites were in, as well as the unbelieving world. They ignored the Prophets, persecuted, and slew them. They put Jeremiah in the dungeon, beheaded John the Baptist, and killed the Prince of Life. Some ignored the servants, some made light of their message, others tortured, persecuted, and killed them. We hear in Proverbs: *“because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught my counsel, and would none of my reproof.” (Prov. 1:24-25)* These words are spoken to all who reject the invitation God has sent out in His Gospel. He sends it out to all men, but many refuse it, many do not regard it.

God sends His prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to call those who do not yet believe to come unto Jesus Christ and to His wedding. He earnestly desires that they come, yet they refuse. It is their own fault then that they bring the wrath of God upon them. They are condemned and refused the wedding because they have refused the invitation. They are not worthy to come unto the wedding because they remain in their sin and shame. They have not been forgiven, they do not receive the Gospel because they harden their hearts and refuse to listen. Therefore the King sends out His armies and destroys those souls in hell forever. They will not partake of the marriage, nor of the supper He has prepared for them. They are cast out forever, not due to God’s lack of work upon them, but due to their own refusal of His invitation. Yet God still desires that the wedding He has prepared be filled with guests, thus He sends out more servants, and:

1. **The worthy attend.** We read verses eight through fourteen of our text: **read verses here.** What Jesus here teaches is that because of the rejection by the Jews of the Savior, the Gospel is sent out into all the world. No longer would the Jews be the possessors of God’s promises, but all Christians wherever they might be found. Through the apostles the Gospel was spread throughout the world and many believed it. What Jesus is saying in our text is parallel to what Paul says: *“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.” (Acts 28:27-28)* You see the Gospel was to be sent out into all the world by the Jews, but when the Jews rejected the Messiah sent unto them, the Gospel was given directly to the Gentiles. Thus in our text the servants are sent into the highways, that is, to those people who were considered unclean and undesirable, the heathen.

So the servants brought together as many as they found, both good and bad. Here we again find a difficult portion of this parable. Many will here ask: does God bring into the marriage both bad people and good people? Will there not be only good people in heaven? No, rather Jesus speaks according to how the world views these men. Some are considered the lowest of the low, such as murderers, thieves, and the like. While others are seen to be good in the sight of men such as kings and princes. They are all alike in the sight of God, and God invites all men regardless of station or perceived wickedness. God’s invitation is to all sinners, and since all men are sinners, the call is sent out to all. Thus the wedding had many guests.

Yet as the king came in to see the guests, He noticed a man was there who did not have on a wedding garment. He was not arrayed in the garments provided by the king. These garments are described thus: *“the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” (Rev. 19:7-8)* This wedding garment which is given to all the guests is the righteousness of Christ upon them which makes them worthy to enter the wedding. Any who have not on this garment are not worthy to attend, just as the man found without one was bound hand and foot and cast into hell. We cannot be worthy to attend the marriage of the Lamb clothed in our garments of self-righteousness, for we will be removed from thence and cast into hell. This is the reason why no difference is made between the “good and bad.” It matters not among the guests who is more sinful than another when attending the wedding, for all are equally unworthy, but all are clothed with Christ’s righteousness which makes them worthy. Therefore when the glorious Gospel net is cast into the world and invites all men to come unto Christ and be saved, it grasps some and brings them into the faith of Jesus Christ and faith takes hold of all the promises of God given to men.

Thus we have a most timely application in our text for today. Our God and Father has prepared a wedding for His Son, He sends out His Gospel into the world by the means of His servants, all true Christians. We go and as many as we find we bring into the wedding. Many will refuse to hear, many will make light of what we have to say, some will even persecute us and kill us. But our gracious God continues sending out His message so that His wedding will be filled with guests. Guests who are worthy solely by the merit and worthiness of their Bridegroom, who gives His righteousness to us as a garment which covers our sin and saves us. O praise the Lord God for His gracious Gospel, which brought us to faith, and for the gift of His Son which makes us worthy to come unto the wedding prepared for all His children. Let us ever have this song on our lips: *“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” (Rev. 5:8)* We are worthy because He is worthy. We are redeemed because He paid the price of His own blood to buy us back from sin and Satan. May He keep us in this true faith until we are finally united with Him for eternity. Amen.