

The Gospel Invitation

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Preacher: Rev J.A.M.Mackay

[0 : 00] Now can we turn this morning to the part of God's word we read, Matthew 22. And I want us to turn to this one of Jesus' parables.

Perhaps if we could read the first three verses again. Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come. But they refused to come. Now when I was in school, we used to get quite a lot of religious education. Some people may think it's going back a long time. But remember the head teacher in her primary school used to explain that a parable was an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Or we may say it is an ordinary story with a spiritual meaning. Now Jesus used parables a lot of the time. He used them to show what the kingdom of God was like.

[1 : 24] You read that in verse 2 here. The kingdom of heaven is like. And then he goes on to say what it is like. It's like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

Jesus is speaking to us in pictures. Really to put us in the picture. Now what this parable, what this story is all about, is about the gospel invitation.

And I want us to use this parable to speak very very simply of the good news of the gospel. And of the invitation that God is giving to every one of us to come to him and to know him.

I want to look at the four main stages. Four main truths. Each of them are important. They perhaps even get more important as we go along. So stay wide awake.

The gospel invitation. The gospel invitation is like a wedding invitation.

[2 : 39] That's the first part. The gospel invitation is refused by some people. The gospel invitation is offered to others.

And the gospel invitation is to be right with God. Now let us think of these four things in turn.

The gospel invitation is like a wedding invitation. Now I was asking the children, how many of you have been at a wedding? Well a lot of you have been at your own. Those of you who are married. You've been to perhaps lots of others.

You've possibly lost count. But just not long ago I was doing a tally. I was taking count of how many weddings I had actually officiated at. I don't have that many. But even the number I had, I'd forgotten some of them.

At least I wasn't sure when they were. Or what I'd said. Now, the wedding is a great occasion. It's a very happy occasion.

[3 : 44] And as a matter of interest, this is, in a sense, a wedding day. Because tonight we will be looking at John chapter 2. Which is talking more about weddings. But anyway, we are talking here about the gospel invitation.

And Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like a royal wedding banquet. I imagine being invited along to, not just an ordinary wedding, let's call them an ordinary wedding.

But to the royal wedding. Imagine being one of the honoured guests there. Imagine the spread.

Imagine all the splendour. Now, in a sense, Jesus is hinting at all that when he says that the kingdom of heaven is like a royal wedding banquet.

There couldn't be anything better to be invited to. And Jesus is God's son. He is the king's son.

That's what we're learning from this. How important Jesus is. Last Sunday morning, in fact, we do it quite often. We come across the truth.

[4 : 54] Jesus is telling us. For example, he's telling us in John's gospel. As we saw it. All the different names that he has. To show how important he is.

And how special this occasion is. That we are invited to Jesus' wedding. Because that's what it is.

We are invited to the wedding of the king's son. But what are we to understand here? Very simply this. And we're going to come back to this. Because it's a one important thing. That we only belong to God's kingdom. If we come to God's son. Now are we sure about that? I think there are a lot of people. Perhaps even people who attend churches. People who read their Bibles. Who are still confused. As to what it means to be a Christian at all. But Jesus is saying we only belong to God's kingdom. [5 : 55] If we come and we trust in God's son. If we know Jesus ourselves. Jesus is the king's son. We read this as well.

That Jesus has made everything ready. He's showing a picture here of the king. Getting all the banquet prepared. And he says. He says it there in verse 4. Everything is now ready. You see when Jesus invites us to come to him. He doesn't ask us to do anything.

At all to get ready. Huh? Nothing. Because he has made everything ready. He doesn't ask us to change our way of life first. He doesn't ask us to prove that we're better people. And that we're worthy of Jesus first. He simply asks us to come as we are.

[6 : 55] Just as I am without one plea. But that thy blood was shed for me. And that thou bidst me come to thee. O Lamb of God I come.

Come as we are to Jesus. Because everything is ready. He's done everything that we need to be Christians. He has come into this world.

He has lived a perfect life. He has died on the cross to pay for our sins. He has come back to life again. From the dead. And he's gone into the presence of God for us.

He's gone to prepare a place for us. And meantime he is blessing us. With all the blessings that we need. All the blessings that Christ has. Everything's ready.

We don't need to do anything. Except to come. Jesus is the king's son.

[7 : 57] Jesus has made everything ready. And Jesus has invited guests. The way that Jesus tells us. Is really from the pattern.

That would have happened in his own day. That if a wedding was arranged. The people who were being invited. Would have been told. Sort of informally beforehand. Perhaps just verbally. And then when the time drew near. The actual date was fixed. The more official invitations were sent out. To confirm. What they'd already been told. You know perhaps somebody drops a word in you.

Look we're getting married. Such and such. Try and keep the date free. But then eventually in the post. You get a. You get a. A wee card. Saying. You're. Invited to the wedding of such and such. Now that. Is a kind of process. Jesus has invited guests. He has. He sends out the invitation. And he confirms the invitation. But what I want to grasp here.

[8 : 53] Is a special sense of privilege. Of being invited. To come to Jesus at all. I think that we.

Some people at least. To some people the gospel. May be new. The whole idea of the Christian faith. May be new. The Bible. May be not something. They have looked at much before.

But to other people. They have heard. The gospel. So often. They have heard. Jesus. Speaking to them. Saying to them. You can come to me.

And they've heard it. So often. That they somehow don't. They don't seem to believe it. Any longer. Or they think. Well that's nothing great. That's nothing new. The reality is.

It's such a tremendous privilege. To be invited. To come to Jesus. And to belong to him. Jesus. Has invited guests.

[9 : 50] The gospel invitation. Then is like a wedding invitation. But I want to take it a stage further. What we learn. In this parable. In this story. Is that the gospel invitation.

Is refused. By some. You have it at the end of verse 3. And the beginning of verse 4. But they refused to come.

Then he sent more servants. And said. Tell those who have been invited. That I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fatted cattle. Have been slaughtered. And everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.

But they paid no attention. And they went off. So on. Some people. Refused to come. But see this. The invitation. Lois refused. Is repeated. That's what we read there. The king had sent out the invitations.

[10:53] They said no. But he didn't say okay. He would tear up. Say. I said scrap. We'll ask somebody else. He went back. First of all. To the same people.

Now that is the way that God deals with us. You see how kind. How good. How gracious God is. Though we spurn him.

He doesn't turn away from us. Immediately. If you like. He gives us another chance. There's no other chances after we die.

We know that. But God is so kind. That he gives us more than one chance. Many chances. In this life. How often.

Have some people refused Christ. Even those of you who are Christians. Like myself. Can think of the number of times. That we sat. We heard the gospel. We were even moved by the gospel. We knew that we should come.

[11:59] But we didn't. We refused. The invitation. And yet God kept coming back to us. We didn't have to. We didn't deserve it. But he did it.

We refused Christ. But he still invites. That's one thing we learned here. But we also learned this. That the invitation is refused. For different reasons.

There are. What I call the three A's here. In verses five and six. One reason why people refuse Christ's invitation. Is apathy.

Plain. Simple. Apathy. They paid no attention. Some people just ignore Christ.

Some people. Can't be bothered with Christ. One of the biggest problems. In communicating the gospel.

[13:07] Is a problem of apathy. Some people couldn't care less. Some people never stop to think. About the claims of Christ. Or who Christ is.

Or to think about their own self. And their own eternal destiny. They pay no attention. They refuse Christ.

Out of apathy. Then you get the other side. The other kind of response here. Is what I call activity. Some people refuse Christ.

Because they are too busy. Now you see it here. Jesus very carefully. I think. Selects his material. For his story. They paid no attention.

They went off. Where did they go? One to his field. Another to his business. Now if you're a farmer. As Jesus is suggesting there.

[14:05] There is nothing wrong. Having fields. You need fields. To grow your crops. To feed your beasts. And so on. There's nothing wrong. With being in business. There's nothing wrong.

In making money. There's nothing wrong. In enterprise. There's nothing wrong. In ambition. In itself. But when these things. Replace. Jesus Christ.

And his claims. They become wrong. They become bad for us. The reason. That some people. Refuse Christ. Is simply because.

They are caught up. In the pace of life. You know. They're just too busy. To stop and think. They're too busy.

To see the importance. Of Jesus. They're too busy. Just making a living. Earning their own livelihood. They're too busy.

[15:00] They're too busy. Following through their career. Or their ambitions. And their activity. Makes them refuse. Such a kind invitation.

There is another kind of refusal. There's apathy. There's activity. And there's antagonism. Jesus here speaks. Of some.

Who not only refuse the gospel. But who demonstrate. Their opposition. To show. Not only. That they haven't time. To go. To the king's banquet. Not only.

That they couldn't care less. But that they actually. Hated the king. They hated his son. You know. We were singing. In Psalm 2. It's working well. To look at that psalm. If you haven't done it.

When we were singing it. To look at the beginning part. The early part. Of the psalm. Which says. Why? Why have the nations. Conspired. Against the Lord. And against his Christ.

[15:58] Why is it. That people. Join themselves. And force. Against God. And against Jesus. Why is it. Why is it. That in this world. That God has made. And where God is good.

To everybody. Every day. Why is it. That people are so against him. The only answer to that.

Is the deepness. Of the rebellion. Of our own hearts. Is the deepness. But here we see people. In refusing the invitation. They show it. They rip it up. They stamp on the ground. And they go against

him.

Jesus is actually speaking. About a situation. That was due to happen. In his own life. He came to his own people. You read in John. But his own people. Didn't know him.

And they didn't receive him. What did they do to him? What did the Jewish people do. To Jesus Christ? They took him. And by wicked hands. He was crucified.

[16:52] And slain. That's what they did to him. That's how much they hated. Christ. You know.

It shouldn't surprise us. Necessarily. That in this world. There are those. Who are against God. And against Christ. It shouldn't surprise us. That we are involved. In any way. In evangelism.

Whether it's on a purely. Private. Personal basis. Or an organized. Church basis. It shouldn't surprise us. If some people. Show their hatred. Against God.

And against Christ. The reason some people. Refuse the gospel. Apathy. Activity.

Antagonism. But then there's another. Very important. Word here. From Jesus. And it's this. That when the gospel.

[17:47] Is refused. When the gospel. Invitation. Is. Repeatedly. Refused. Then those. Who refuse it. Are themselves.

Rejected. Now can we get that. I've tried to stress. How kind. And good. And gracious. God is. How he keeps coming back to us.

Even when we turn him. And spit in his face. But there comes a point. When God's grace. To us. Stops. And we're like that.

There comes a point. When God's spirit. No longer. Strives. With man. Where God. Just leaves them. To themselves. And shuts them out.

Now are we listening. To God's word today. Are we? They did not deserve. To come. Jesus said. Instead.

[18:44] They got. What they deserved. Now Jesus is speaking here. Particularly. In a historical situation. Of what is to happen. To himself. He is speaking here. About the Jews.

Rejecting. The son of God. Rejecting. Christ. He is speaking. Of the terrible. National.

Consequences. That would follow. That Jerusalem. Would be raised.

To the ground. It would be. It would be destroyed. And its people. Would be scattered. To the ends of the earth. To some extent. They still are. As a consequence. Of their rejection.

Of Christ. And if you are looking. Around the world. And if you are looking. At the news. In the world. We have a living. Day by day. Reminder. Of what God will do.

To those who reject him. It is a picture. Of something. Much worse. Because the sad truth. Is this.

[19:37] God does not only. Reject the Jewish nation. What I would call. Temporarily. Because he will again. Come to them. But. The sad truth. Is this.

That if we. Keep. Rejecting. Jesus. Then he will. Finally. And ultimately. Reject us. That's the truth. The gospel.

Is refused. By some. Refused. But repeated. Refused. For different reasons. But if refused.

Persistently. Then those who refuse it.

Are rejected. What are you doing? Can I just ask you this. Before we go on any further. I am very pleased.

To see people. Coming to this church. And I am. Always say to folks. Even if they are not Christians. They are. They are more than welcome. In this church. And I wish that more. More and more people.

[20:34] Would come. To hear. About God. And to hear God's good news. For them. But if you are coming. All the time. And you are not making any progress. If you are no further on. If you are actually saying no.

To Jesus. What then? What are you doing. With the gospel invitation? It is refused. By some.

The gospel invitation. Is extended. To others. You see. What we have here. Is a brighter side. Of the picture. God's servants.

Are sent out. With a new invitation. We were speaking. Recently. In the church. Here. Different occasions. About.

The great work. Of evangelism. What I would call. The greatest work. In the world. The great work. Of evangelism. That God. Has given us. That we are the church.

[21:30] That we are his people. Now can I just. Repeat. What I am always saying. Just to remind us. Or to reinforce. That all Christians.

Are missionaries. And all Christians. Are evangelists. And the reason I say that. Is because. What is a missionary? We think of perhaps. Somebody wearing.

A funny hat. And paddling. In the canoe. Up some river. In dark Africa. Or South America. Or somewhere. What is a missionary? A missionary. A missionary. Is essentially. Someone who is sent out.

And here we read. That the king. Sent out. His other servants. We. We are. If we are Christians. People who are being sent out. By Jesus.

We are missionaries. And we are evangelists. Evangelists are not just men. Like. Dr. Billy Graham. Or Louis Palau. Or. Whoever we happen to know. Who are. Who are. Who are.

[22 : 26] Who are. Who are. Who are. Who are special equipment. For evangelism. Evangelism. Is the work of. Telling the good news. That's what the word. That's what the word means. And if we are Christians.

We are to be. Telling. The good news. Now. Take this. Just because. Some people. Refuse the gospel.

God. Doesn't give up. And what does he say to us. Just because. Some people. Refuse the gospel. Nor should we give up. We may find opposition.

We may find apathy. Or people are too busy. Or people are dead against us. Keep going. He sends us out. To tell the good news.

All of us. If we are Christians. God's servants. Are sent out. With a new invitation. Well listen to this. All sorts of people. Are invited. It's a very interesting thing.

[23 : 23] This. You see. The gospel offer. Is. Is not just from the minister. To whatever congregation. Happens to gather. But the gospel offer. Is by all Christians.

To all peoples. Go and preach the gospel. To all the peoples. All the nations. And it's all sorts of people. You see.

We tend. I think. To be selective. In who we want to speak to. About Christ. Don't we. We want to. We're a bit selective. Perhaps. Even who are. Happy. Who feel at ease.

And inviting along. To the church. We think. We think. That so and such. And such kinds of people. May not fit in. Somehow. Eh. Am I only being suspicious. I think.

We. We do tend. To be selective. Now. I'm not saying. That. That there are not people. That we perhaps. We. We. We. We. We relate to far better. We can speak to far. Far more easily. And so on. But be careful.

[24 : 21] About being too selective. For this reason. That all sorts of people. Are to be invited. He sends out his servants here. To the street corners. And to anyone you can find.

We read in verse nine. No distinction whatsoever. Not just these specially selected people. Who were invited originally. In fact. He says. Because of these special people.

Who turned their noses up. At their invitation. He says. Take anybody you like. Now. What's the truth here? It's this. That God draws no distinctions.

God draws no distinctions. When he invites people to himself. He's not saying. Look. I am speaking to you personally. Because I know you. You are a decent sort of person.

And I like you. And therefore you can come. He's not saying that. He's not saying. This is a gospel for you. Because you belong to Scotland. Or you belong. To the free church. Or you belong.

[25 : 22] To a certain creed. Or you have a certain color of skin. He's saying. This is a gospel for anybody. And for everybody. You are invited. It is to whoever will.

To whoever will listen. Whoever will come. Whoever will believe. Is invited. In other words.

This invitation. Is for you. Please. Don't think. That when you're coming along to church. Somehow. The minister is speaking just to other people.

I know that some people occasionally think. Say that. Oh you were looking right at me today. Well. I don't pick on people like that. I don't think. Not intentionally. The Holy Spirit does. But I don't.

But on the other hand. I don't bypass people either. I want to speak to everybody. And I want to say this. That this gospel. This invitation is for you. It's good news for you. You are invited.

[26 : 23] To come to Jesus. All sorts of people are invited. And then we learn. Listen. All sorts of people do come.

People will come. That's the optimism of evangelism. Perhaps we're living in a situation here. Where we're seeing things. Good things happening. Perhaps there's other congregations.

That we know of. Perhaps there are very few new people. No converts for years on end. And so on. And we think that. That's the normal. Run of things. Well I can think back.

And I know there's others here. Who can think back. To the earlier days. Of this congregation.

When we were. But a small handful. Few in number. Very few. As the Bible says.

And I remember. Being encouraged. Having to be encouraged. Because I tend to be very discouraged. At times. But people saying. It'll get better. They will come. And that was a rebuke.

[27 : 23] To my own spirit. Because that is the truth. Of God's word. I believe. In the optimism. Of evangelism. I believe. That when the gospel is preached. That though some people may refuse.

The majority may refuse. Some will come. All sorts of people will come. There is always. Ultimately. And I say ultimately.

There is always. A positive response. To the gospel message. And we have no right. To be negative. We have no right. To have our heads. Down in our boots.

And say. God will not bless us. Because we do not deserve it. Well we don't deserve it. But that doesn't mean to say. That God won't bless us. If we are preaching. The gospel faithfully.

If we are witnessing. Faithfully. If we are being missionaries. And evangelists. Sent out. Telling the good news. I can guarantee. I was going to say. I can bet. I can guarantee.

[28 : 18] There will be results. I can guarantee. On the basis of God's word. That he will come. As we keep inviting. Some will keep coming.

Till as we read here. God's house. God's wedding hall. It's full. That's what the history of this world is about. Do you any wonder about that?

I know it's a confusing kind of world. It's a confusing kind of history. But you know what's happening? The gospel has been preached. And it will be preached in all nations. And then the end will come.

When God has gathered in all his people. All sorts of people. He invites all sorts. All sorts will come. That's the optimism.

Yeah. I'm telling you this. We said it last week didn't we? Looking at the few early disciples. They were all different. The four of them that we read about. So are all these people who come.

[29 : 19] We're all different. All sorts of people. There's one last thing I want to mention here. The gospel invitation is not only extended to others.

The gospel invitation is this. It is to be right with God. I want us to grasp that. I think perhaps that is the most important truth.

Of all here. Can I put it this way? You've been at weddings? Yeah? I bet you went to a wedding. Whether it's your own or somebody else's.

You dressed up. You probably went and bought a new outfit with clothes. Maybe not. But you were dressed up. You went sort of decent. Imagine going to a wedding. In a dirty boiler suit.

Imagine going to a wedding. In your ordinary working clothes. Not care to do hoops. What the guests. What the rest of the guests.

[30 : 16] Or your honored couple think. Now here we have a man. Who dared to come into the wedding banquet.

But he didn't have on the wedding clothes. What does that mean? What does it mean? You see the king had laid on the banquet. It was his invitation.

It was his show. But he'd also laid on the clothes. That is a picture. We understand the back room. That was the way they did it then. You didn't have to go out and buy your own tugs. You were provided with.

As you came along. There's a boom for you. Now. That's. That is. Why? The king has a right to be annoyed.

More than annoyed. He has a right to be angry. With his man. Because this man has. Though he has accepted the invitation. To the banquet.

[31 : 14] He has spurned the fact. That he needs to. To be dressed in a decent fashion. In a proper way. So what is this teaching us? Teaching us simply this.

That we need. To be right. With God. God. I know we have lots of needs. And you know your own needs.

And perhaps God knows them even better. But our most important need. For any of us is this. It is to be right. With God. God is concerned.

As we are reminded today already. God is concerned. That we have a personal relationship. With him. That is what he's concerned about. Not just that we're good in our own eyes.

You see I think with a problem. It's a problem. It's not limited to certain people. It's a basic human problem. That we estimate our own goodness.

[32 : 20] We think. Well I am quite good really. And therefore God is bound to accept me. Just as I am. Now it's not enough.

That we are good in our own eyes. Because in God's eyes we're not good. You can read the Bible to get that quite clear. We have all sinned.

We have all come short of God's glory. It's not good enough. That we simply are church attenders. That in itself doesn't necessarily please God. It doesn't make us better automatically.

It's not good enough. That we are. That we are even accepted as church members. You know a person may be a member in a church. And yet they may not be right with God.

So I'm thinking forward to next Sunday morning. When we have our communion. When we are gathering at the Lord's table. What are we saying? We are saying well those who are there are first of all church members. Yeah?

[33 : 19] First of all. No. First of all. We are right with God. Where our sins are forgiven.

Are they? Where we have a heart that is made new. Where we are living for God. That is our need. To be right with God. Doesn't matter what we think of ourselves. It doesn't matter what the world.

Other people think about us. What does God think about us?

Have we been made right with God? Our sins forgiven? Our heart made new? Living for God? Can I say this too?

Only Jesus makes us right with God. That's what his wedding garment. His wedding clothes come in. He provides the covering. We are sinners.

[34 : 19] That's what God calls us. And he's not embarrassed to call us that. We are embarrassed to hear it perhaps. But we are sinners. Sinners in nature. We are sinners in our behavior.

That's the way that we are. And what's more we cannot. We are not able to make ourselves right with God. We can't dress up.

You know. There was a tramp once. Somebody was saying to me just the other day. They don't see them going around Scotland much nowadays. I don't know. But there was this particular tramp. He used to sit more or less at the same place.

He was in the city. And he used to sit in the street. And perhaps beg of it. And so on. And this artist. This painter. Came along this day. And he thought. We can't even draw this chap.

We made a great picture. So he says to him. Look. Can you come along to my studio? And he gave us a dress. And he says. I want to paint you. So the next day. It was a Monday morning. The door knocked.

[35 : 18] And there was this guy. And he says. That's no use is this. What the tramp had done. He'd gone and got dressed up somewhere. You know.

Now what God says to us. We've got to come as we are. We can't dress ourselves up. We can't make ourselves right with God. It's simply not possible. It's not acceptable.

But Jesus makes us right with God. He lived a perfect life. He died to pay for our sins. And he rose again for this very reason.

To make us right with God. Do you know this? You can look at all the sin of your own life.

And then you can look to Jesus. You can see how perfect he is. You can trust him. Trust what he's done. And that is what makes you right with God.

[36 : 16] Jesus makes us right with God. Do you trust him? And we only belong. This is my very last point. I want to say.

Because it goes back to the enforcement we said earlier. We only belong with God. If we are right with God. What happened?

To this man. He was thrown out. Turfed out. Tied hand and foot. Out into the outer darkness. Now unless we trust in Jesus.

We may be among God's people. We may be attending church. But we are not one of God's people. We do not belong. Unless we trust in Jesus.

And if we do not really belong to God. God will throw us out. Throw us out into the agony. And to the remorse. And to the darkness.

[37 : 20] And that is forever and forever. We have been talking about the gospel invitation. It does give us a choice.

The choice is to come to Christ. To accept the invitation. Or to refuse it. And today. You are invited to Christ. You are invited to come to him.

He wants you to be his. You are invited to belong to him. And you are invited to be right with God. Will you come?

Will you be right? Today Jesus says. Let us bow our heads. Briefly in prayer. Our Lord and our God. We bless you. Though we have turned our backs on you. You have not forgotten us. And we thank you Lord. For the message of the gospel.

[38 : 18] The invitation. That comes running after us. To tell us that God wants us. That we are invited. That Jesus asks us to come.

Lord we pray. That we will not refuse that invitation. But we ask our God. As we hear you calling. That you would turn us. That we would come.

That we would belong. That we would be right with God. Hear us. For Jesus sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.