

The marriage supper

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[0 : 0 0] You please turn back with me to the passage of Scripture we read together in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 22, and Jesus' own words that he spoke in this parable, the parable of the wedding banquet.

And the reality is for us that we seek to be challenged by people who are important, and there is no one in this universe who is more important than the Lord Jesus Christ this evening. We know him as the crucified and risen Savior, the one who is sovereign over life and over death. And each of us here this evening will be people who will meet with Jesus Christ. Either we meet with him now as Lord and Savior, or we meet with him, indeed, whether we meet with him as Lord and Savior or not. We will all meet with him on the day of judgment. Therefore, he is important. He is tremendously important for us to consider and to listen to. You may not want to listen to a preacher. You may not want to listen to a stranger who comes into your pulpit. But I would implore that you would listen to Jesus Christ through his own word as he speaks to us, because it is for us that he gives his word.

It's for us that we would be challenged by it and moved by it, that we would see and know and understand his interest in us and his love for us as the living, risen Savior. We can't see him this evening. He's not in our midst physically. But we know and we believe that as the sovereign God, he can see into each and every one of our hearts this evening as we gather together. So we come in his name with his authority, not with any delegated authority of a church or of individuals, but with the authority of God's word. And the question that I would like to ask this evening is one that is answered in this parable. How is it that I can get to heaven? How can I get to heaven?

It's a very important question. It's one that we all must ask ourselves. And not only that, but how can I be a Christian now? Because it's all interlinked. The parable is a parable which likens what is being described to the kingdom of heaven. And that isn't simply a future state. It's not just something that happens once we die, that we either go to heaven or to hell, which is part of the reality.

But when we come to Jesus Christ now, we are already part of the kingdom of God. We belong to the kingdom. So the question, how can I become a Christian and how can I get to heaven, are linked together and linked together under the umbrella in this parable? So maybe that we are challenged and would ask ourselves these important questions. I'd like just to point out one or two things from this parable, from this wedding parable, and apply it then to salvation. Because that's what Jesus meant to happen. Because it's likened to the kingdom of heaven, likened to the gospel and the message of salvation.

[3 : 13]

So we'll look at some of the features of the wedding and then apply it to the challenges that it leaves us this evening for our own hearts. And if you're not a Christian, it will be challenges that I hope you will consider heart and soul this evening in your life. And we notice by way of introduction that it was a totally unique wedding. It wasn't an ordinary wedding, even by our standards. It wasn't an ordinary wedding, even by biblical standards. It was a wedding that was a royal wedding. And it was a royal wedding which, after the royal guests refused to attend, was opened up to ordinary people. So it really was a unique wedding where the king, with the wedding of his son, was opening the invitations to ordinary people in the highways and the byways and the towns and in the villages. Because those who had been invited refused to accept the invitation. And the uniqueness of the wedding picture that we have here is a reminder of the uniqueness of the salvation that Jesus Christ is offering. It's a unique salvation. It doesn't grow old and foisty and moldy with time. It doesn't become irrelevant. It doesn't become something that only relates to some people and not others. Salvation is the gospel of

Jesus Christ, which is a revolution for ordinary people, where Jesus says that he has an interest and a love and a concern for people, ordinary people like you and like me. And that Jesus Christ is interested as the king of kings in your heart and your soul. We are people who, generally speaking, are relatively unimportant in the world's eyes. We're not important and significant. We're not high and mighty, generally speaking. But Jesus Christ, the king of kings, has a great interest and a great desire and a great concern for our souls. And that is a wonderful thing that the gospel is for ordinary people like me and like you. And we're invited into fellowship with the king of kings. We're invited into the palace of the king. We're invited into his royal family to be children of the most high God.

We're invited to know him as our father. We're invited to be forgiven by him. We're invited to have importance and significance through that fact. Not through anything we can achieve. Not through our bank balance. Not through our gifts and our talents. Not through our abilities. Not through our position in life or our popularity. Or how many would consider coming to our funeral when we died. But simply because we are ordinary people. The uniqueness of the gospel is that it is no respecter of persons.

God doesn't look at you and doesn't look at me. And great us and say he's fit for salvation. She is fit. They are not. They are high and mighty. They are not. They are nobodies. It is the gospel for all people. So none of us can walk away and none of us can say this evening, well that message from Jesus Christ is not for me. I can't be one of God's people. Because we know that the uniqueness of the gospel is that he offers himself and the invitation goes out to all who hear. And that includes all who are here this evening. But we notice also that in this wedding in verse 4 we're told that everything has been prepared. I have prepared my dinner. The oxen and the fatlings are killed.

And all things are now ready. And the king has prepared this day. He has organized the day. And those who work for him I'm sure would have been the ones who organized everything. The food was ready. The marriage was ready. The ceremony was planned. The invitations had gone out. Even as you'll come to see, as we'll come to see in a little while, the clothes were ready. The clothes not just for the bride and the groom, but the clothes for all the guests in this magnificent wedding were prepared. There was even clothes prepared for the guests. Everything had been prepared. As we take these truths and apply them spiritually, the same is true of the gospel message of salvation. Jesus Christ nailed to the tree at the end of his hours in darkness. He cries out, it is finished. Not just finished for that hour. Not just his life. Not just the pain and the suffering. But the accomplished plan of salvation had been brought to that point where he knew that he had completed it and had satisfied the divine justice and had pleased God his father. And the work was finished. And he was Lord and God. And he would be raised on the third day. And he would be the savior who comes this evening in his power and his glory to draw people to himself. Jesus Christ this evening, he's won his place in heaven for all who will come to him by faith. He's preparing the place.

[8 : 41] The work has been done. Salvation is finished. What does that mean? Well, it means that we can't add to what Jesus has done. There can't be a day when you'll be in more need of Jesus Christ as your savior. You can't arrange anything more to make salvation better. You can't give as a plea to God anything in payment. You can't add your penny worth to what Jesus has done. It is finished. It is complete. It is full. It is free. And he says, simply accept the invitation. That is what I'm asking you to do in love because I have prepared everything. Time hasn't changed that. And it hasn't made it irrelevant and unimportant or insignificant. The gospel of Jesus Christ, his salvation, his finished work on the cross is a finished work for you and for me. And everything has been prepared. So we see it's a unique wedding, a wedding where everything has been prepared. But maybe we're passing the obvious that also is described as a wedding. Salvation here is likened to a wedding. And not again an ordinary wedding, a royal wedding, a significant wedding, a wedding where the son of the king was to be married. And all that we associate with weddings would be what the Jewish people who heard this parable would associate with weddings. It was a celebration. It was a time of happiness. The expression and the exposing of love, a time of gathering and fellowship and togetherness around this particular event. Now, if this was the only reference to weddings and salvation, maybe we couldn't make terribly much of that. But there is no doubt that throughout the Bible we have the relationship of the Christian, the person who comes to Christ with Jesus Christ, likened to a marriage relationship, a spiritual marriage relationship.

And the emphasis is on unity and on love and on relationship, on facing one another and being together and being united. It speaks of love and faithfulness and devotion and many of the attributes and characteristics that we would apply to a marriage ceremony and also to a marriage itself.

In Revelation, we're invited to come to the wedding supper of the Lamb, that heaven itself is one long wedding celebration when we are constantly in God's presence and all the love and the relationship and the warmth of belonging and family that goes with that. Weddings can be strange things and they can be very strange things for ministers because you often don't know a lot of people, a lot of guests at the wedding. But a family wedding is entirely different where you're seeing people that you haven't seen for a long time. Kith and kin, your blood relations and friends. And it's a wonderful time when you renew relationship and friendship. And that picture of the wedding is used as an illustration of salvation itself. Jesus Christ reminds us this evening that when you come to Jesus Christ, you're coming to one who is the lover of your soul. Song of Solomon is a wonderful book and it speaks of the love of God for his people in in these marital terms, in these terms of love and belonging and fellowship. It is deep-seated joy, deep-seated happiness. Coming to Christ is knowing that great joy and knowing that great peace and that great forgiveness is the love of God. So that we can say all is well today with my soul even when things are difficult and we struggle in our lives.

So many stay away from Jesus Christ. Why? Is it because you think it's like coming to a funeral? Is it because you think if you come to Christ, well, that's the end of happiness for me? I'll need to be dull and dry and boring and solemn from now on if I come to Jesus Christ.

It will be the end of the joy that I know and I experience. May the Lord God forgive us if as Christians we have given the impression that to become a Christian is to enter into a relationship of joylessness or such solemnity that we don't express or show or witness to the wonderful change that has happened in our lives. See, until we know Christ, we will never know true joy and true celebration and true love. There is no joy to beat the joy of being a believer and of knowing Christ.

[13 : 52] And when we come to him, everything changes. Our whole perspective changes. We said of somebody who became a Christian that as he walked to work the next day, even the grass was greener.

There was nothing different, but he knew and he saw and he experienced the fullness of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord, the belonging that comes from that. So it's a wedding. And as Christians, we must not only in some kind of hidden way be joyful, suppress joy all the time, but we should express that and show that and witness to that in our lives wherever we are as Christians. And whatever we have to give up to come to Jesus Christ, we receive a hundred times more.

What is worth holding on to if it means walking away from Jesus Christ, your Lord and Judge, Saviour? But we also notice in this parable something very solemn.

And what's very solemn in this parable is that you can't wear your own clothes in this wedding. It's quite a difficult verse and it seems quite harsh. In verse 11, where we're told that the king comes in to see the guests and he notices there, there's somebody who's not wearing a wedding garment.

And he said, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And the man was speechless. Now there's things implied in this verse that aren't directly revealed, but it would be the case that in such a wedding, and the people would have known that, that as I mentioned earlier, not only was the invitations given and the encouragement to come along, but even the wedding clothes were provided so that the person could come and be kitted out in the wedding gear for the wedding also.

[15 : 44] And here was somebody who'd come along and he was walking along and said, I think I'll go to that royal wedding. Be a good crack. I'll enjoy being at that feast. And he looks around him as he walks towards the king's palace and he examines himself and says, well, I think my clothes are as good as anyone else's here.

Quite like this. This is quite a new suit that I'm wearing. I don't think I'll really need to wear the king's clothes that he's provided. I like what I have and what's more, it's been specially fitted to myself.

And the clothes that he gives, they'll never fit me. I have what I have to wear and I'm happy with that. And I'll look okay when I get to the feast. I'll not be out of place when I get there.

And of course, everything is entirely different. When he does receive a visit from the king at the feast, immediately he's standing out like a sore thumb because he isn't wearing the gift that the king provided, the wedding clothes.

And not simply does he look out of place, but the king thinks, well, he's offended my gift by rejecting it and by just simply coming in his own clothes.

[16 : 57] And therein is a great picture of ourselves with regard to salvation because the clothes that we have here are a picture of our own lives. And very often we think, well, our own lives are okay.

There's nothing wrong with them. I do my best. I try my hardest. I come along to church. I read the Bible. And we walk towards God and we think, this will do for him. This is all that he requires.

And when I come into God's presence, I'll say, Lord, I did my best. And I tried my hardest. But when we come into the presence of the king, we will recognize and know that God required and requires us entry to heaven and into his presence and into his fellowship.

Perfect lives. Not lives just with one or two little mistakes and faults. Not lives with white sins that we can cover over. Perfect, righteous, good, holy, faultless lives.

That is what he requires as entry into heaven. Like the clothes that he provides. Perfect in every way. So, you know, as an aside, it doesn't matter how we compare to other people.

[18 : 12] It doesn't make one foot of difference. If we are the best person in the village or in the town compared with all those around us, it doesn't even matter if we're much better than those who we regard as Christians.

That isn't the issue. It isn't what counts because they are not our judges. And not even the ministers or the elders or anybody else are the ones who make the judgment.

It is God before whom we come. And God says, I need perfection before you can come into my presence. And that is where his beloved son comes into this picture.

Beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And God says, you take the life of Jesus Christ and you wear that. You accept that gift.

The gift of salvation, which is the righteousness of Christ. Put it on. Put it on. Wear it. Wear him. Wear what he has done.

[19 : 15] Because what he has done is what we couldn't do. He lived the life that we couldn't. And dies the death that we deserve. That is the gospel in essence.

He lived that righteous life. Jesus Christ at Calvary, before he went to the cross, could have gone straight into God's presence. Justifiably, entirely in a right way.

Because he had lived a perfect life. And he was in fellowship with God. And there was not one sin. One thing that he had done wrong that would bar him from entry into heaven. And we can come this evening in the same way.

Into fellowship with Christ. As we take what he has done for us. As we were reminded this morning. We take him as our representative. The one who has died in our place.

The one who has lived a life we can't. We can take that to ourselves. And the Holy Spirit. And live as believers. He covers us.

[20 : 21] His righteousness covers our lives. Our grubby, selfish, sinful, proud, self-reliant, ignorant, lustful lives.

Christ Jesus is our substitute. But maybe you think, well that's unfair. How can I do? What good is it just covering my sins up?

That doesn't seem fair at all. That just means they're covered up. They're not really taken away. They're not cleansed. But that's the other side of the cross, isn't it?

That we are told that Jesus Christ had our sins laid on him. And he who knew no sin becomes sin.

So that in him we might be the righteousness of God. So on the cross what God sees is his son wearing your filthy rags and mine.

[21 : 17] All the grubbiness and the sin and the misery and the degradation. It's on Jesus. It's laid on his shoulders. And he is punished for it on the cross. He takes the price.

He takes God's wrath. He takes all the power of evil and the judgment of God on himself. In our place.

He die, me no die. That is what it means to be a Christian. That he dies in our place. And we're reminded today and this evening that we can't come to heaven.

We can't bargain with Jesus Christ. However young we are. However old we are. Whatever we have done or not done in our lives. However nice. However upright.

However charitable and kind. We can't come to him pleading our own goodness. And our righteousness and saying, Lord please let me in. Let me be a believer because of these things.

[22 : 16] Because you know when we say that. What we're saying is. Thanks very much for what you did on the cross. But I didn't need it. You didn't need to die for me. Because I have my own righteousness. And it is quite sufficient.

Jesus. We know. Didn't die in vain. But the solemn reminder to us is as Christians. That we wear his righteousness. We don't simply come to Christ and return to a life of filthy rags spiritually.

We wear his clothes. We live his life. We are filled with the spirit. And we must be those who evidence his grace. That we are like Jesus Christ.

Or becoming like Jesus Christ. You know God says there's a solemn day in judgment when many who believe that they believed in Jesus Christ.

Who thought they were believers. Will come to face him and say, Lord, Lord. Did we not do many mighty things in your name? And he will say, depart from me.

[23 : 18] Because I never knew you. I didn't know you. My word. Word. These are the most solemn words in the whole of heaven and earth and our experience.

There is no complacency here, I hope. And as preachers and hearers alike, we certainly recognize the solemnity of being those who are saved by grace.

And how dreadful and awesome and awful it would be for God to declare these words of anyone. In particular ourselves. So you can't wear your own clothes.

The provision has been made. And he asks you to come and accept him. And his provision. And his salvation. And it's free. And it's full. And we don't need to do anything.

And we don't need to change. Before we come. We accept his salvation. And we allow his righteousness and his spirit to change us. Because I can also remind you and myself in this parable.

[24 : 19] That not only was the king justified in being grieved by this man's rejection of his gift.

But also the man himself was speechless. The man was speechless. In verse 12 we're told that. As the king came into his presence and everything became clear.

The man himself was speechless before the king. He had made a monumental misjudgment. He had done something that was radically and critically wrong.

He had misjudged everything. And it was ignorant of him in the extreme. To come into the king's presence without accepting the gift of his clothes for the wedding feast.

And he was expelled. He was banished. He missed out on everything that that wedding had to offer. And we can apply that also to salvation in our own experience today.

[25 : 19] There are many reasons that you might have for not becoming a Christian this evening. For not being in the kingdom of God. For not belonging to Jesus Christ. And you may be able to articulate these words well.

You may have strong, as you regard them, reasons for not coming to Christ. And you may have great eloquence in sharing these reasons both with yourself and with God and with other people.

I'm okay. I don't need a saviour. But I don't understand what it's all about. It's not for me either. So I could manage to maintain a spirituality or go to a prayer meeting on a Wednesday evening.

Many sinful pleasures that I'm not yet ready, Lord, to give up but will one day. I can't do anything because I'm spiritually dead. I'm not of the elect. I'm too good. I'm too bad.

The church is full of hypocrites. I don't like the preacher. His message isn't for me. We can have good, reasoned, wordy, five-point rejections of why we don't become Christians.

[26 : 29] And they may sound reasonable. And they may leave us free to walk out of church with, as we imagine it, a clear conscience and our heads held high. But one day is what I want to encourage you to consider.

One day all things will become clear. One day everything will be absolutely clear that none of your reasons and none of your excuses had any validity whatsoever.

And you will be left speechless. With no fist to shake at God. With no theological argument. And with nothing to offer.

Dumbstruck by the monumental stupidity of the reasons that you gave that seemed so okay at the time. For rejecting his invitation of love.

And of grace. And of healing. And of hope. You will see the feast laid out. And the glory of life to the full.

[27 : 32] And all the pleasure and the privilege of those who will be there. The invitation in your back pocket. Left outside.

You know we can try and scare people with horrible pictures of what hell is. But really to me the most awful thing about hell is simply that.

Being left outside. Being outside of life. And of grace. And of Jesus. In all his loveliness. And in his creative glory and majesty.

In being left out of the perfect fellowship. And the place where there is no sin and no death and no darkness. And no separation. Left outside.

You know if you love your family very closely. And they had a family celebration. And when they saw you coming they locked the door. And left you on the outside. Oh I hurt to the core.

[28 : 32] How sad you would be. At the thought of being left outside of that place. Well magnify it a million times. To be left out of the place where your God is. Your maker.

Your saviour. Or the saviour who offers himself to you. Knowing that this evening. The invitation went out to you. The invitation that said everything is ready.

The clothes are provided. My righteousness is there. My death. My resurrection. Satisfaction. The invitation of God. It's all gifted. Freely. To you this evening.

You will spend an eternity. Gnawing your heart out. At the ridiculous reasons you had. For despising. Or staying away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know the reality too about this picture. Is that it is not of an outward rejecter. There are the outward rejecters here. In this parable. Referring.

[29 : 32] Probably in the first place. To the Jewish nation. Who had rejected Jesus Christ. The ones who originally were given the invitation. Those who said. No. We don't even want to come. We have no time to waste.

With the king's offer. Well there's these. And maybe you're an outward. An outright rejecter. No. Don't speak to me about these things. I'm here on sufferance.

But the same. Destination is for those. Who were in many ways. Close to the kingdom. Tasted of the heavenly gift.

Who maybe admired Jesus Christ. And said. Well one day I may come. One day. When I'm better I will try. But who always left it.

To tomorrow. You know this is a great parable. And really. I have missed. So much out of it. It's bursting at the seams.

[30 : 28] With relevance to you this evening. And to me. Bursting at the seams. With what Christ will do for you. Young people. Teenagers. What better time.

To found your life. And to found it in Jesus Christ now. What better foundation to have. He will never love you more.

And you will never need him more. Than you will this day. Come to Jesus Christ. Because everything is ready. And I hope as Christians. We're encouraged by that. Encouraged to live in his light.

And live in his love. And live in his righteousness. And survive day by day. In his strength. Not looking forward to ten years. Hensin. I don't think I can manage to keep up.

My Christian faith for that long. It is in his strength. And by his grace. On a day to day basis. New every morning is your faithfulness. We are reminded.

[31 : 26] That's because we are to live our Christian lives. On a short leash. Not praying at the beginning of the month. And hoping that will survive. And keep us going. Till the beginning of next month.

But being filled on a daily basis. With his grace and his goodness. And if you're not a Christian this evening. I implore you. To respond to the glorious invitation.

Of Jesus Christ. To dine with him. Spiritually. To be in the kingdom of God now. And enjoy the hope. Of the not yet.

To take your sins. And your life. Which at the moment. Separates you from him. With his back turned. With the filthy rags.

That he says. He sees. And let him take them. On the cross. And clothe you with his own righteousness.

[32 : 21] Pray. If you can't see any of that. Please pray. That your eyes will be opened. Pray if you have never prayed before. That Jesus Christ will speak to you.

And will enable you to recognize your need. I can't do that. And nobody else can do it for you. But as you pray. Seek by faith that God will open your eyes.

To make you see and understand. God is saying. Come to my wedding banquet. Don't offer God. Many reasons.

And many. Discussions. As to your rejection. And don't end up speechless. In the hell of being. Outside.

Because all that you fear now. Will become a reality forever. In that God forsaken place. And yet he offers us his love and his grace. This evening.

[33 : 19] Today. Now. Come. Into the kingdom of God. Amen. Let us pray. Lord our God.

We rejoice in the simplicity of the message. We ask that we would be forgiven. If we as preachers. And as a preacher. Have put any barriers.

In people's way. If there has been anything unclear. Anything that has distracted anybody. Or anything that. Is not quite right.

Lord take these things away. And forgive us for them. But we do ask and pray. That what would come home. To every soul. And every heart here. Is the reality of Jesus Christ.

The relevance of Jesus Christ. For them. The urgency. Of coming to peace. In Jesus Christ. Lord God. May another invitation.

[34 : 18] Not be thrown aside. May it not be kept. For another day. May we not make your reasons. For staying far. From Jesus Christ.

Whatever it is. Lord God. That people this evening. Might hold dear. Whatever barriers. It might be put up. Whatever reasons. May. In all its apparent. Justifiableness.

Be made before God. May they all be broken down. By the power of God's spirit. In people's hearts. This evening. And may many come. And make their peace. With Christ. Through his finished.

And full work. On the cross. And in his resurrection. Power this evening. Continue with us. Lord God. We ask and pray. Accept our parting. Song of praise.

And may it be. For some people. In here this evening. May it be the first time. They have truly sung. Praise to God. As they recognize. And know. He indeed. Is their redeemer.

[35 : 14] We ask it. In his precious name. Amen. Amen.