

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 15th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Wedding Feast
Proper 23
Matthew 22:1-14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Our hearts are ready, O Lord,
our hearts are ready!

We will sing and make melody!

We will awaken the dawn!

We will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples,
we will sing praises to you among the nations.

**For your steadfast love is great above the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

All Knowing Father,
you seek men and women, boys and girls,
who will worship you in spirit and in truth;
and so we ask you to inspire
and bless the worship week by week in this church,
in our words and music,
our prayers and hymns,
and our psalms and lessons.

Open the hearts and lips of those
who worship you today all over the world,
that all of us may listen with an alert conscience
to the preaching of your Word
and come with true repentance and faith.

We ask this in the name of
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: "Wonderful, Merciful Saviour"

Wonderful, merciful Savior
 Precious Redeemer and Friend
 Who would have thought that a Lamb
 Could rescue the souls of men
 Oh, You rescue the souls of men

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper
 Spirit we long to embrace
 You offer hope when our hearts have
 Hopelessly lost our way
 Oh, we've hopelessly lost the way

You are the One that we praise
 You are the One we adore
 You give the healing and grace
 Our hearts always hunger for
 Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father
 Faithfully loving Your own
 Here in our weakness You find us
 Falling before Your throne
 Oh, we're falling before Your throne

You are the One that we praise
 You are the One we adore
 You give the healing and grace
 Our hearts always hunger for
 Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
 we confess that we have sinned against you
 in thought, word, and deed,
 by what we have done,
 and by what we have left undone.
 We have not loved you
 with our whole heart and mind and strength.
 We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
 In your mercy forgive what we have been,**

help us amend what we are,
 and direct what we shall be,
 so that we may delight in your will
 and walk in your ways,
 to the glory of your holy name.
 Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Through Jesus Christ forgiveness of sins
 is proclaimed to you.
 In Christ we have redemption through his blood,
 the forgiveness of our trespasses,
 according to the riches of his grace.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: "Faith to Carry On" Choir

Responsive Reading

Psalm 106:1-6

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
 for his steadfast love endures forever!

**2 Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD,
 or declare all his praise?**

3 Blessed are they who observe justice,
 who do righteousness at all times!

**4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
 help me when you save them,**

5 that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
 that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
 that I may glory with your inheritance.

**6 Both we and our fathers have sinned;
 we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness.**

Children's Hymn #357: "Jesus Loves Even Me"

I am so glad that our Father in heaven
Tells of His love in the Book He has given;
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Refrain:

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.

Though I forget Him and wander away,
Still He doth love me wherever I stray;
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,
When I remember that Jesus loves me. [Refrain]

O, if there's only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be:
"O, what a wonder that Jesus loves me!" [Refrain]

Children's Lesson**Prayer for illumination**
(Congregant Prepared)**Scripture****Matthew 22:1-14**

22 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind

him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Sermon

Today’s parable is still a continuation of the parables that Jesus is delivering to the religious leaders that had gathered to challenge him on his authority. Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus bluntly tell the religious leaders of the time that they were placing their own selfishness above the laws and teachings of God. Last week we saw him bluntly tell them that because of their refusal to obey the covenant that they have with God the Kingdom will be taken from them and given to someone who will do the work of God.

This week the parable is no less harsh, it will deliver yet another message of God’s grace and salvation to those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and a message of loss, judgement, and damnation to those who reject him as their Lord and Savior.

It starts simply, Jesus gives them the image of a wedding feast. In every culture around the world weddings are a big deal. We all know people who have spent extravagant amounts of money on a wedding ceremony and reception. Even if someone comes from a very poor background there is still the expectation of a wedding that provides the guests with drinks, a meal and entertainment.

Jesus’s first miracle was performed at a wedding, where he transformed water into wine to prevent the groom’s family from suffering shame and embarrassment of not providing adequately for their guests.

Weddings are something that people of all social, economic, and cultural backgrounds can understand. And their idea of being an expensive event and a time to show off holds true regardless of that background.

Weddings are also stressful, the invitations need to be perfected, the bridesmaids have to coordinate dresses and shoes, the groomsmen have to coordinate suits and ties, and the guests try to come dressed in the best clothing that they can.

It is true when we receive an invitation to a wedding, we are happy for the bride and groom. However, we also know that going to the wedding will have a cost. We need to take time off from work, travel to the wedding, maybe find somewhere to stay, if it is a ‘destination wedding’ the costs of attending a wedding can add up very quickly.

If we are asked to be a bridesmaid or groomsmen, the costs of our coordinated clothing can also add to the costs of attending a wedding, but because of the role we have been invited to take, we feel like we cannot decline. Truthfully, when we are invited to anyone’s wedding, no matter how close we are to the bride and groom we feel some obligation to go, to take part in

their special day. The costs of the clothing, the travel, and the gifts are offset in our minds by the celebration of the joyful event we have been invited to take part in.

So, when Jesus starts with this parable by describing an invitation to a wedding, we all understand it the same way the people listening to him in his day did. However, those who were gathered listening to Jesus share this parable lived in a different world than ours, it had a well-defined caste system. People lived within well-defined social classes and there was no mixing between those classes, the wealthy lived a very different life, and the higher someone was in that caste system the more elegant and extravagant the wedding. In this case Jesus is speaking of a royal wedding, the very top of the caste system. To give you an idea of the difference, the average cost of a wedding in Canada is around \$30,000, an extravagant wedding can cost up to \$370,000, however the wedding of Prince Henry and Megan Markle cost \$57 million dollars.

Jesus is speaking of a royal wedding, the greatest of the greatest events, there would be a great deal of prestige in even receiving an invitation to such an event. In Jesus's day it would be a great honor to receive the invitation, and also a great obligation. When the king invited you to an event it was more than an invitation it was a summons, it said, 'come to the wedding and be properly attired'. To refuse an invitation from the King was an insult, it was a snubbing of the king's authority, and the king might take offense at that snubbing and seek out retribution.

Yet that is what we see happening in this parable. Could you imagine receiving an invitation to that \$57 million dollar wedding of Megan and Harry and deciding not to go? Think of all the people you could meet and take pictures with; the bragging you could do with family, friends, and strangers because you attended that wedding; the food and drink that would be the best of the best because it had been prepared for royalty. The idea of someone turning down the invitation to a royal wedding is unthinkable.

The king had spared no expense in the preparation of this wedding feast, and it was not just one or two people who had declined the invitation to the wedding, they all had. This would shock all of those who were listening, this should shock everyone here. How could someone say no to the best food, the best wine, the finest decoration, the possibility of rubbing elbows with the social elite? Not one of the people invited chose to attend, the guest room sat empty, this was a great insult to the king, it filled him with embarrassment and shame.

The king would be shocked, all those he had invited, all he had summoned to celebrate this day with his son, had snubbed him. Other than their clothing, the king had provided everything, all the guests needed to do was show up. The king was snubbed, shamed, and embarrassed, yet he showed his restraint, he does not lash out immediately instead he sends out his servants once again to invite his guests to join in the celebration.

The servants go out and invite the guests once again, telling them of the extravagance of the feast to which they are invited, telling them of the food and drink that is ready and waiting for them, all they need to do is come. Yet even when these servants come to them with the

description of the great feast, they decline the invitation, they say no to the great feast. They choose to go to work in their fields and in their business, they choose to do the things of this world rather than attending the great wedding feast, worse yet there are some that choose to seize beat and kill the servants of the king.

Jesus is speaking of the wedding feast of the king, trying to get the people gathered to understand that this feast is the invitation that God is giving to his people to join him in his kingdom.

The book of revelation teaches us:

Revelation 19:9

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

The king had invited his people and they had chosen not to come to the great wedding feast because they had placed the things that they felt were of more importance in their lives over the invitation. This is what Jesus had told the religious leaders they would do in the parable of the tenants we studied last week. He is once again driving home the point that they were the ones who were rejecting the grace and mercy of God. The king reached out to his people more than once, the same way that the master sent servant after servant to his tenants, the same way that God sent prophet after prophet to the nation of Israel and its leaders, and they choose to ignore the call, and in some cases, seized, beat, or even killed the one that was sent to them.

So, like the tenants last week that the master would have killed so that he could hand his vineyard over to people that would honor their covenant, the king is done with reaching out. The king sends his armies and destroys the people who have harmed his servants and burned down their cities. Which will take place roughly 40 years after Jesus gives this parable, when the Temple in the city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD.

The king then sends out the same invitation to the common people. The nobles who had been summoned had refused their king and been judged, they were not worthy of the feast because they had not appreciated what he had prepared, they had chosen what they had over what he was willing to provide.

The servant went out and invited everyone that they found along the roads, the good and the bad. Like the parable of the tenants, those who were chosen, the first invited, will be replaced with others. This is God's invitation to the gentiles to join his kingdom. Notice though that he sends his servants out to invite everyone to the feast, the good and the bad. The king does not specify who should be invited, the same way that God does not specify who should be invited. There are no rules or requirement to be invited into God's kingdom, everyone in this world is invited to the wedding feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians we need to remember this, we should be inviting everyone to church, inviting everyone to come into relationship with God, not just with our words but with the way we live

in this world. For many in the world this is not the message of Christianity that is given, the message is usually you need to clean up and then join the church, but we see here that was not a stipulation of the king and it is not a stipulation of God. Everyone good and bad is invited to take part in the wedding.

This was yet another shock to the gathered listeners, commoners could never even dream of attending a royal wedding feast. That was a jump of social castes that would be unimaginable. The best the commoner could hope for was the table scraps of a royal wedding feast.

In Jesus's day even when a feast was held where multiple social castes were gathered there was a structure to eating. The highest caste ate their fill first, then the next and then the next, everyone eating whatever the higher caste had leftover for them to enjoy. So, for a commoner to be invited to sit at the table first was unheard of, unimaginable and the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon them.

They knew it was a great honor, so they would get dressed in their very best clothing, their Sunday best as we would say, for some it would be a suit or a dress, for others it would just be the cleanest clothing that they had. They knew it was an honor and they wanted to show reverence and respect to the king by coming into his presence dressed appropriately.

The modern church loves this message, everyone is invited to take part in the feast, good and bad, saint and sinner, rich and poor. Everyone was invited and the great hall was filled with guests. And if Jesus was to end the parable right here, we could all go and live our lives however we wanted and believe that we were invited into the kingdom of heaven, but the parable does not end there.

You see while all those who were invited recognized the great honor that was bestowed upon them by the king and they prepared themselves to receive that honor by dressing themselves appropriately, there was one man who did not. He heard the invitation of the king to attend the feast and he went, but he did not prepare, he went in the clothing that he was wearing when he heard the invitation.

This parable is a wonderful example of the world we live in, Jesus is telling of what will come of God's people. The wedding feast is the church, people who have been invited throughout the ages by the apostles, by the saints, by people like you and me. People who have answered the summons to the great wedding feast, to take part in the celebration of Jesus Christ. It is not just gentiles, there are Jews who are part of it as well, those who are faithful to God, those who did not refuse his invitation. The church is made up of all of God's people, a place where there are no divisions between caste or social status, a place where we are all equal under God's sight. What gets us invited to the feast is our faith, the grace of God invites us to the table, and we need to be willing to see who we are, prepare ourselves and come to the table of the Lord.

Like those who were gathered at the wedding feast in the parable, we need to recognize the great honor that has been bestowed upon us by God and we need to come to him dressed appropriately to show our respect and reverence to Him.

Yet there is the one man at the feast who is not dressed appropriately. Everyone was invited to the feast by the king, everyone, good and bad, was invited. There was only one expectation, come dressed appropriately. The king walks in and sees this one man, dressed wrongly, and he asks the man how he got into the feast being dressed inappropriately. He speaks kindly, and yet the man does not respond.

This is troubling, why did this man come to such a grand feast, such a noble event so carelessly? Why did this man show such little respect of the king, such little respect to the honor that was bestowed upon him? The man could have responded in a million different ways, he could have laid out a thousand excuses, but the truth is when he is confronted by the king, he knows that he is dressed inappropriately.

All are invited to the kingdom of God, the good and the bad, all are invited. But when you get there, you had better be dressed appropriately. You better understand the honor that has been bestowed upon you. God is king and God is Holy and his invitation to the wedding feast in his kingdom is not a casual invitation. It is true all are invited to come, but we are called to come as a royal priesthood, a chosen generation. The invitation to the feast in God's kingdom was paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and Christians need to know that, and come into the feasts showing the respect and reverence we are called to have.

When we are invited into God's kingdom we are not meant to come 'just as we are'. We are meant to be transformed, changed from the people we were into the people God is calling for us to be.

Now some of us might be thinking, 'What if those were the best clothes that the man had?'. That is a legitimate question, but the answer to being dressed correctly in God's kingdom comes from the Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

When you become a Christian, you become a new person. Galatians tells us:

Galatians 3:27

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Which means we are no longer dressed in the ways of this world.

Romans 13:12-14

¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

God clothes us, God transforms us from the worldly people we are into the Christlike people we are called to be. Our worldly selves are clothed in sin, no matter how much we claim they are not. When God invited us to the feast, he also provided us the correct clothing, the clothing we were in the Kingdom of God is washed bright white by the blood of the lamb as we learn in the book of Revelation.

Jesus is really making the point that many are called, but few are chosen through the example of this man. The Gospel is to be shared with all of the people of the world, broadcast to all people, all nations, to the four corners of the earth. It is meant to be broadcast to everyone, regardless of their status here on earth, the same way that a net is cast into the sea. The Gospel is meant to go out to everyone and invite everyone to attend the great feast in the kingdom of heaven at the end of the ages.

We are to invite everyone, some will not respond to the invitation, some will outrightly reject the invitation, some could care less that they are invited, and others will graciously accept the invitation.

Yet in the group that comes to the feast there are still some who have not shed their worldly way, they have come to the feast, but they are not dressed appropriately because they are still wanting to hold only their earthly ways. The chosen are only those who come to the feast in the proper attire, dressed in robes washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, people who have heard the message of the Gospel, the teachings of the Scripture and recognized their own sinful nature, repented, and turned to God for their salvation.

The church is the preparation for this feast. There are people in this world who will reject every invitation they receive to come to church. They will have a million different reasons, they have to work, they have to go somewhere and do something. There will be some who reject the teaching outright and will lash out at the church for even suggesting that they come. There are some who will lazily attend church, come when they feel like it and not come when they do not.

There will also be those who come to church, but only in a physical sense. They will come every week, maybe even read their Bible. They will pick and choose the verses that they want to apply to their lives and discard the rest. They are the ones who come to Church Service Sunday as Christians and live the rest of the week as worldly people. People who love their sin so much that they will find any way to justify it, to protect it, not recognizing that their interpretation of God's Word is them putting themselves above the God in authority.

They are the careless man who comes in common clothing to the wedding feast. In their desire for autonomy in their lives, they have in fact rejected the king. They have not shown him the reverence, and respect he is due and because of that they will be cast out of the feast. This is our postmodern world in a nutshell. People who do not realize that the Gospel is meant to save us from our own sin, not take away our pleasures. People who reject God's authority in their lives in so many different ways and will not recognize their mistake until they stand before God in judgment. People who believed that they were part of the wedding feast until the king notices them, clothed in their sin, and has them cast out into the darkness, bound hand, and foot. Bound in the very places that often lead us into our sinful ways as we walk and work ourselves away from God's authority in our lives.

In the book of Mark we learn that Jesus himself said:

Mark 9:43-48

⁴³ And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

So those who live under their own law are bound tossed into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is how the Scripture describes judgement on the sinner as we learned a few months ago in the parable of the weeds:

Matthew 13:41-43

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

This will come as a shock to many, they will walk in this world proud of themselves and their faith, proud of the work that they think they are doing in the name of the Lord, only to realize on the day of judgement that they are not clothed in the proper attire. Only to realize that being a subject of the king, and part of his wedding feast, requires more than just an invitation, more than just lip service, it requires submitting to his authority in every aspect of life. These are the ones that will hear the dreaded phrase from the lips of Jesus Christ, 'depart from me; I never knew you.'

So, as we leave here today let it be with a reflective heart: Are we coming to the feast clothed appropriately? Why are we in church, is it for the right reasons? Are we ready for his second coming? Are we serving him faithfully? Are we submitting to him fully? Are we truly thankful that Jesus Christ willingly went to the cross to die for the debt of our sinful ways?

God has called everyone to attend the feast in his kingdom. This is the message of the church, this is the message of the Great Commission, all are invited, the saint and the sinner. And those who are truly his, are in this world as his servants, still spreading this message as they partake in the Great Commission as they act as the Salt and Light of His Word in this ever-darkening world.

Let us pray,

We Thank You for All Your Benefits

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 we thank you for all your benefits.
 You have given us body and life
 and have graciously sustained us to this day.
 Do not take your blessing from us.
 Preserve us from greed,
 that we may serve you only,
 love you and abide in you
 and not defile ourselves by idolatrous love
 of wealth or goods,
 but hope and trust only in your grace;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 15

Hymn: "Jesus All for Jesus"

Jesus, all for Jesus
 All I am and have
 And ever hope to be
 Jesus, all for Jesus
 All I am and have
 And ever hope to be

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans
 I surrender these
 Into your hands
 All of my ambitions, hopes and plans
 I surrender these
 Into your hands

For its only in
 Your will that I am free

For its only in
 Your will that I am free
 Jesus, all for Jesus
 All I am and have
 And ever hope to be

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn: "Spirit Song"

Oh let the Son of God enfold you with His spirit and His love,
 Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.
 Oh let Him have those things that hold you and His Spirit like a dove
 Will descend upon your life and make you whole.

CHORUS

Jesus oh Jesus, come and fill Your lambs
 Jesus oh Jesus, come and fill your lambs

Oh come and sing this song with gladness as your hearts are filled with joy
 Lift your hands in sweet surrender to His name.
 Oh give Him all your tears and sadness, give Him all your years of pain,
 and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

CHORUS

Pastoral Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are our living head.
Teach us to be your body here on earth—
your hands, your feet, your eyes, and your compassionate heart.
Lord, send the impulses of your love into the sinews of this church.
May your will and thoughts direct us.
Let your hands, through our hands, supply food for our neighbors' hunger.
Let them hear your voice as we visit and talk with them.
Let children come to us and sit in our laps, as they sat in yours.
Without you as our head, Lord, we are lifeless.
We wait for your power, your Word, your instruction.
Fill us with your life and love,
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit as the one true God,
Now and forever, we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you.