

Matthew 21-11-28a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 28th day of November, 2021.

We would be continuing our study in Matthew chapter 21, but we are going to start there and move into something that has been afflicting my soul this past week, and I was going to try to wait and address it later on, but it just is bugging me, so I've got to get it off of my heart, and it has to do with some things that are circulating in the church at large today, and our family has been looking at it and discussing it, and it's uppermost in my mind, and I think that's not an accident. It is important for all of us to be aware of, so we'll begin in Matthew 21, and we're going to talk a little bit about the concluding section of the parable of the wedding feast, and then we're going to move into a different, now for something completely different, topic. Let's begin by asking God's blessing on our study, and we'll begin.

Father, it is such a wonderful blessing to be securely held in Your hands, to be sustained by Your grace, to be endowed with the presence and the filling of Your Holy Spirit, to have the comfort and encouragement of Your promises, Your examples in the Old Testament and in the New that give us confidence and guidance and stability, the cleansing that takes place in our souls as we refresh ourselves at the oasis of Your Word is a wonderful resort to which we have the privilege of attending. We pray that as we look at these portions of Your Word together this morning, that Your Holy Spirit will superintend, will impress these truths on our hearts, help us to see how pertinent they are and where the application is in our individual circumstance as we seek to live a life that is pleasing in Your sight, that prepares us for service and function both now and in the ages to come. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You will remember that in Matthew chapter 21, after the triumphal entry, as it is so labeled in your New King James, and moving on to the confrontation with those who were questioning the authority by which Jesus said and did what He accomplished, then He began this series of parables, the parable of the two sons, then the parable of the wicked vine dressers, and now this parable of the wedding feast. And He said, The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding, and they were not willing to come.

These servants who are sent out, by the way, are douloi, like the Air Force Academy calls their plebes, doulouis. These were the general purpose slaves, the outdoor servants, if you will, the field hands in many cases. They were the ones who would go and procure supplies, who would deliver things that might have been sold by a landowner.

They were the functionaries. They were the staff that dealt with the external outside

world on behalf of their master, douloi. So these douloi are sent out to call those who were invited to the wedding.

A previous general invitation had already been issued, and as we have worked our way through this parable in terms of its interpretation, we've seen that God initially issued this invitation to His people in the earliest days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. It is nascent, it is incipient as early as the Genesis 3 conversation in the garden with the seed of the woman being promised. There is the opportunity to recover what was lost in the garden, which is fellowship and function with God.

But it is necessarily limited until the problem of sin is fully dealt with, the exposure to evil and wickedness that is necessary to inoculate us for the eternal future is accomplished. It is a process. God didn't just snap His divine fingers and say, all is forgiven, come on back in and let's find that tree of life and get you all fixed up.

God works all things together for good, and the failure and the fall is something that God extends across the centuries and across the millennia for His own purpose to reveal the extent of what separation from God produces, what sin and human shallow ideas of righteousness and the progress of fallenness, how severe it is, how bad it is. It isn't enough to be told. We have to see it and experience it for ourselves.

You tell a child, don't touch the hot stove, but there's no lesson that sticks in the mind like actually touching the hot stove. We don't take their finger and poke it on the stove and say, see how that feels now, don't ever do that. It is up to them.

If they are willing to heed our guidance, they can avoid a lot of pain and suffering. But to the extent that because of their fallen nature, they disobey and suffer the consequences, rightful and necessary consequences for disobedience, rightful and consequences that picture and shadow the rightful and necessary consequences that God places on disobedience and on sin. We train up a child in the way that they should go by imposing the same kind of thing.

If you choose badly, you are going to have bad experiences. And it is necessary for us to experience the pain, the suffering, the harsh result of willfully separating from God, willfully departing from his word and his plan. We understand this.

It goes back as old as the garden. But the progress of restoration involves that exposure. We are recovering from the disease.

We are recovering from the infection of sin. And the recovery involves building up our immunity, building up our antibodies that will recognize it in the future and eliminate it. So God is working all things together for good.

But some of the things he is working together for are quite harsh. Death, suffering, the proliferation of heinous, bitter conflict and the treatment, man's humanity to man, I like

to call it, is necessary. But it is just harsh.

There is no getting around it. It is extremely hard to look upon in many cases. You look at what happens to children in horrible homes or in horrible countries.

You look at starvation. You look at disease. You look at neglect.

You look at abuse, horrible abuse. God in heaven does not intervene and stop the cigarette just short of the skin that it is about to be extinguished in. He doesn't stop these awful things.

He allows them. And it's a hard truth. We, in our rather immature and idealistic fantasies, would like to see the beatific vision every day.

But we don't. It's a part of the plan and purpose of God. God is wiser than we are.

He is more powerful than we are. And he is a just and righteous God. And there will be recompense.

And there will be restoration for those who have suffered loss, who have suffered pain, who have suffered the treatment by fellow humans that is so hard to look upon. God has the power and God has the will and God has the righteousness to restore all things, to recompense and over abundantly compensate those who suffer loss in this life. And we've seen those scriptures even earlier here in the Gospel of Matthew.

So an invitation is offered. And whether or not we enter into that restoration, whether or not we enjoy the elimination of these heinous and awful causes, sin, evil, vile, wickedness, whether we enjoy deliverance, salvation from those things depends on what we choose. It isn't a life raft into which we are unwillingly drawn.

It isn't a salvation into which we are compelled to enter. It is all about choice. Nowhere is that more clearly emphasized than here in this parable.

A general invitation from the king to attend this wedding banquet was extended and communicated. Everyone got this invitation. When the time comes, and you have to know a little bit about wedding feasts in Israel, we've touched on this several times and in several ways, but these would last usually for several days.

This is how they could run out of wine at the wedding feast at Cana. You would think, my goodness, they didn't lay in enough for a house full of guests for one day. This would extend across several days.

And another feature of these is that at the outset, at the beginning of the festivity, it didn't start at night. It wasn't an evening meal. The festivity started after the wedding had been performed and consummated.

Now there is the celebration. The celebration is post-wedding ceremony, if you will. So it begins the following day, mid-morning.

It's what was called the early meal. And so once the invitation was given, and why do you give an invitation in advance? So that people can prepare, can be ready. I might need some fresh clothing.

I might need to arrange travel or I might need to arrange lodgings if I'm not family and I'm not going to be put up in the king's house. Where am I going to stay? I'll reserve a room at the inn and so on. So you anticipate this wedding.

The invitation says it's going to take place at such a time. And so you arrange your schedule around it. I'm not going to go on a journey.

I'm not going to inspect my land. I'm not going to have inventory at my business. I'm going to close my business and I'm going to attend.

The purpose of the first general invitation is for planning and preparation by the guests. Now that the thing is prepared, the douloi are sent out to say, it is time to come and start the festivities. The early meal is ready.

This is a morning meal. So they went to call those who were invited in verse three to the wedding and they were not willing to come. It doesn't say they were not able to come.

Fellow, T-H-E-L-O. This is the same word that is used of God's will. They were not choosing to come.

They chose voluntarily of their own free will not to come. It isn't that they were unable. Sorry, you invited me, but I'm in prison.

I'm in stocks and chains. I cannot free myself to come. I'm in bondage to sin, as it were.

I don't know how Calvinists can get through this parable. They were not willing to come. So again, he sent out other douloi saying, tell those who are invited, see, I have prepared my dinner.

I've prepared, this is really not dinner. This, I've prepared the early meal and the oxen and fatted cattle are killed. This is going to be for the evening meal.

You know, the day is already planned for. The meal that you will be able to eat when you get there is already on the table and there is a feast coming in the evening. And you can see here that the servants who come would now be in the John the Baptist and disciples of Jesus category.

Those who were initially invited are not willing to come. And so other servants come and say, look, it's imminent. It's on the table.

This is coming to the banquet in the days of the Lord Jesus. The first invitation is the days of the Old Testament, the prophets, the pictures in the law, the promises of God. Now that it is time to enter, this is the call to Israel all down through those centuries.

You can prepare yourself to enter into the joy of the Lord by not sacrifice, not the empty rituals, but serving God from the heart. What does the Lord require of you, old man, but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. So this encapsulates everything from the earliest promises of God and the call to the people of the King to come and celebrate this great event.

The feast in the evening is likely to be a picture of the actual millennial kingdom in both the previous age. And in this age, we, and we begin to enter into the blessings of the kingdom, even before it formally arrives. And this is why we have the fullness of the Holy spirit.

Even in the Old Testament, you could have the Holy spirit by request. This is a kingdom promise. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh in the, in those latter days, but you could enter into those blessings by request, by anticipation, you could be an early arrival.

As it were, you could come a day or two early and say, is there anything I can do to help prepare? Can I help procure? Can I manage some part of the celebration? These people have the opposite reaction. When they got the general invitation, they did nothing to clear their schedule. They did nothing to prepare.

And when the imminent message is given, it's time to come. They are not willing. And so when the other servants come in verse five, they make light of it and go their way.

One to his own farm, another to his own business. These are the self-interested. They're not hostile.

They're not rebellious. They are just self-gratifying and apathetic to the King, not interested in the King or his son or the wedding, not interested in the feast. I got more important things to do.

And so they go their way and they make light of it. Others, the rest in verse six are actively hostile, hate the King. And to express that hatred, they take his servants and abuse them, mistreat them and kill them.

Two different reactions from this group of the called. When the King heard about it, he was furious and he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. It's not something you notice right away, but as you look and think about this parable, how long does it take to assemble the army, have them march out, find the city and destroy it and the murderers? This is not likely to happen between the time the servants are sent out to call the people on this day of the beginning of the feast.

He sends out the armies. The destruction and the burning are probably going to happen ultimately after the banquet is over. It's sort of displaced in time.

You can't wait. The King's not going to say, well, have you destroyed those murderers and burned up that city yet? Okay, now let's start the feast. It just talks about their ultimate fate, but it's somewhat displaced in time.

It's not like the King delayed the banquet for a week while he destroyed the murderers and burned up their city, but their fate is dictated at the point that their hostility, rebellion and rejection are reported. The King says, this is the judgment that is falling on you. The fulfillment of that judgment is not pertinent to Jesus' parable in terms of its timing.

You see what I mean? So then he said to his servants, notice then, after the destruction, is that when he says it? If you see this destruction as being the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, well, he didn't wait until after 70 AD to say, let's have Pentecost and start the church. You see what I mean? Jesus pronounces the judgment on Jerusalem and on Israel because he came to them and they would have none of him. He came into his own and his own received him not.

But actually the extending of the invitation to those that were not original invitees in the parable takes place after the destruction when it says, then he sent out. But we don't stumble over that because this is a concept parable. It's not trying to give us a strict chronology as is so often the case in the word of God.

So then he said to his servants, after he has pronounced judgment on the murderers and their city, then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find invite to the wedding. The word there for highways is real interesting because it literally means crossroads at the intersection of the highways.

He doesn't send them into the streets of the capital city where the palace is. He specifically sends these servants. And for the third time, we have Duloy here.

He sends these servants to where the roads, the highways intersect where there are a multitude of people who are all traveling. These are travelers and this suggests that many of them are not even citizens. They may be passing through the King's domain, but their citizenship is not an issue.

He doesn't say go out to the large roads intersect. These are people coming and going from outside the King's domain. And as many as you find invite to the wedding.

The Luke parable, I think it's Luke 24 that talks about the, a different feast with a different point and a different purpose has the word compel. And we dealt with that when we did the gospel of Luke. This is not compelled.

This is call, kaleo, invite the very same word that's been used throughout for the invitation, invite them to come, call them to come because calling is the issue with which this whole section culminates. Many are called, right? So call those. So those servants went out into the crossroads, into the intersections of the big roads and gathered together all whom they found both bad and good.

And bad is put first because their quality in terms of how society judges them is not an issue in the invitation. The invitation is not extended only to the good. The invitation is extended regardless.

So what is the criteria for being allowed to come to the wedding banquet? Will you come when you're called? I am sure that if you extended this a bit, not every single person in the crossroads came, but the servants went out and invited. And there were so many people there that there were a great number of respondees who were willing to come and they came. Now you think a little further because it's important to the parable that these people are invited from the crossroads because where is their closet full of clothes? At home.

So if they're going to come to the banquet and have a garment, it isn't, well, remember Jesus says, follow me. And the guy says, well, let me first go bury my father. Let me finish plowing this field and then I will come.

And you know, you drop what you're doing and you come when you're called. These people come directly from the crossroads. So they've got no baggage.

They don't certainly don't have a royal wedding garment that they just pack around in the case they run across a King who's having a banquet. These people at crossroads who are traveling to and from don't have wedding garments packed in their back. So Jesus tells us where the wedding garment comes from.

And this is, is also communicated to us by long history. Turn back to first Kings. Okay.

Thank you. Let's try second Kings nine. Yeah.

Jehu is anointed the King of Israel under Elisha in the days of Elisha. And the house of Ahab is going to be judged violently in that day. And so when you get to second Kings chapter 10, verse 18, this is where I wanted to land.

Jehu gathered all the people together and said to them, Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much. Therefore call to me all the of Baal, all his servants and all his priests, let no one be missing for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live.

But Jehu acted deceptively with the intent of destroying the worshipers of Baal. So in verse 20, Jehu said, proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. So they proclaimed it.

Jehu sends his servants out and says, we're going to have a big celebration. He is the King, but it's not for his son. It's for Baal.

Sent throughout all Israel, all the worshipers of Baal came so that there was not a man left who did not come. So they came into the temple of Baal and the temple of Baal was full from one end to the other. And he said, here's, here's my verse, all of that struggled to get here to verse 22.

And he said to the one in charge of the wardrobe, bring out vestments for all the worshipers of Baal. So he brought out garments for them. Everyone is provided a garment for Baal.

For the celebration by the King. This is what the King does. Notice every single Baal worshiper in all of Northern Israel comes and he's got enough garments for all of them.

The King provides the garments for the celebration. This is the idea in Jesus' parable. So these that come from the crossroads back in Matthew 22, verse 10, they gathered all whom they found and by extension, they find those who are willing to come.

There are times I've, I've seen somebody stranded on the highway, trying to change a tire and I would love to stop and help them, but I can't because I've got an appointment that I have to make. I can't not be at the airport. I can't not take my mother to the doctor.

I can't, there are times when you are traveling and you just absolutely cannot come. But the ones whom they found who said, sure, I will come came and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But now this is almost a second parable because the first parable, its point is those who were initially invited were unwilling to come and are judged for that unwillingness.

This second portion is now about those who are willing to come. Right? We're now looking at the group that is in the banquet hall. So point of the first parable, when you are called, do you respond? And there are those who by right have had plenty of time to prepare.

They weren't accosted as they were traveling down the road and have to make a sort of an immediate decision. They've had weeks, if not months to prepare and they refused to come. Here are travelers who are willing to shift their plans and come to the banquet, put their stuff on hold.

The one who has the farm, the one who has the business, my stuff's too important. These travelers are traveling because they have places to go and people to see, but they are willing to put that on hold to subordinate that to attending the banquet. Of those people who have done this, who have responded to the call, communicated through the servants and have come, we start sort of a new section of the parable, if you will, or in

some ways you can look at it as a separate parable that's already been set up by what precedes.

When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he says to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? The man is speechless. Why does he have no reply? And I think I mentioned last time, this is the same word that is used when the Pharisees saw that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they couldn't draft an answer.

You know, you err not knowing the scriptures or the power of God about the woman who was married to seven brothers and the rest of it. They could not answer him because they had no legitimate answer. They had no argument against his reply.

They were put to silence. This is the very same word. The man is silent.

Why? If he was a traveler that hadn't happened to pack a wedding garment of his own, he could say, well, look where I came from. I was headed to Transjordan there. I was going to the cities of the plain.

I was off to Galilee when you stopped me. He is without reply and without excuse because the wedding garments are available from the wardrobe of the King. And this man decided that his own clothing, probably still full of travel dust, is good enough.

And while he was willing to come to the banquet, looking no doubt for its benefits and its celebratory blessings, he isn't willing to honor the King and his son by putting on the prescribed garment. I want to be at the wedding, but I don't want to do what it takes to qualify, to stand in the assembly of the righteous. Friend is a cordial greeting.

How did you come in here without a wedding garment? How could you possibly come in here without a wedding garment when I've got a stack of them that my servants are dressing every guest in? And you didn't go to the servants and have them hand you this garment, and you did not put this garment on before you came in. You believe that your own garment is sufficient. And we know from Revelation 19 that garments can be a metaphor for righteousness.

Revelation 19 says the white robed saints in fine linen, clean and white, these are the righteous deeds of the saints. It's not just the ability to have a garment made of righteous deeds that we perform comes from the King. In this picture, it's not transferred righteousness.

It's not imputed righteousness from somewhere else. It is the opportunity to put on a garment that is made, if you see a harmony with Revelation 19, righteous deeds of the saints. This is a robe of righteousness.

It is a robe of qualification to stand in the presence of the King and his son. So, friend,

how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he is silent. He is speechless.

The word actually can mean gagged, incapable of speech. So the King said to his servants, this is a different class of servants now. These are the diakonoi.

These are the house slaves. Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into the darkness outside. There is weeping and gnashing of teeth out there.

And then you have the third section of the parable, which summarizes the points of the first two. And this is not really a parable so much as a concluding statement, but it's the third section of this parabolic communication. Many are called, few are chosen.

A helpful way to understand this is to look at the content of the parable and to clarify, add a few words, which I will give you right after the break.