

Matthew 21-12-05a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 5th of December 2021.

We're continuing our study in the Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 22. We were looking at this fascinating parable. It is rich with detail, rich with content, fruitful for application that concludes with the episode regarding the wedding garment, about which we have a little bit more to say this morning.

But let's begin by going to the Lord in prayer and asking His blessing for the fruitful and effective presence of the Holy Spirit to help us to understand the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, which draw us closer to our Father in heaven and help us to understand how best we can exploit the wonderful gifts and opportunities that He has given us through our Savior. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to spend time together as a fellowship, as a spiritual family gathered in Christ to worship, to give thanks, to enjoy the benefits of the gifts that you've distributed in our midst. We're encouraged.

We are a greater thing in our gathering together than we are as the sum of individuals. And we know that this is because of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, His work on our behalf in qualifying us to come into your presence, qualifying us, giving us the supernatural unity that comes through your Holy Spirit. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together this morning, that your Spirit will superintend the delivery and the reception so that we can understand your plan and purpose more fully, we can be washed and cleansed in our souls, set free from the lingering effects of the sin that is around us and dwells within us, and that we can lay hold of righteousness by faith and prepare ourselves for service and opportunity now and in the kingdoms to come.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. You will remember in Matthew chapter 22, the parable of the wedding feast, we saw this last time that the initial invitees having made light of the invitation or having actively opposed it and persecuted and even slain the messengers who delivered it, that invitation was extended to others.

The servants are sent to the crossroads where there are travelers. He's not sent to the city square. He's not sent to the marketplace.

He isn't sent door to door. The servant and his companions are sent to the crossroads where there are travelers from every walk of life, every source and destination, and they are extended the invitation. And when they come, they are allowed into the banquet hall where there is light, there is food, there is festivity.

But when the king comes to survey the scene, he sees a man who has entered without a wedding garment. There's been a lot of head scratching about the wedding garment. I

think we've been able to come to a better understanding of that by looking at the fact that in such situations, the king supplies the garment.

We saw this in Second Kings chapter 10 last time, and we noted that this garment is required to be in the presence of the king and his son. Without this garment, you're ejected from the banquet hall. So the question comes up now, not only where do you get this garment, but what exactly is it? And based on the fact that the king holds the man responsible for not having it, and he is speechless in terms of an excuse.

He cannot plead he's traveling. He's only got an AWOL bag with one change of clothes, and there was no wedding garment. These people are from the common class, the common milieu.

Typically, rich people sent their servants on traveling missions and did not go themselves unless it was an affair of state, the wise men traveling for the birth of a new king, perhaps. But in general, when you go to the crossroads, these are the commuters. These are the travelers.

These are the merchants and the servants of those who are going about their business, so they cannot be expected to have clothes suitable for a royal wedding occasion. So for everyone in the hall to have had such a garment, it was obviously supplied by the king. And if it is supplied and there's a stack of them just outside the banquet hall, then this man has no excuse and must be speechless when he is questioned on why he's not wearing it.

So. We saw this in Second Kings 10, 22, when Jehu calls a feast for Baal, and when all of the Baal worshipers assemble, they are all given a garment. Jehu says to the one in charge of the wardrobe, bring out vestments for all the worshipers of Baal, and he brought vestments for them.

This is 10, 22 of Second Kings. Now, what would these garments be as we interpret the parable? Obviously, this is not a literal garment. But as you see in Revelation 19, 7 and 8, the bride herself.

It invites a connection, doesn't it? To see that the Lord Jesus and the bride pictured in Revelation 19. The bride herself in Revelation 19, 7. It says, Let us be glad, rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. She has made herself ready.

She's responsible for her own preparation. How does she make herself ready? In Revelation 19, 8, it says to her, it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

So the clothing is acts of righteousness. If the bride is, in fact, composed of the saints and you would have to expect that unless the bride is angels and it's not, then it is some

group of sanctified ones. That's what a saint is.

Not the not the saints that you hang their medallion from your rear view mirror or, you know, claim them as the patron saint of this or that. Not the Catholic saints, but the righteous deeds of God's sanctified ones. Now, this is really important.

We've talked about it and seen it throughout the scriptures in any number of our previous studies, especially New Testament studies. When God delivers his people, look at it in the Old Testament. He delivers Israel out of bondage in Egypt.

He didn't break the yoke of bondage off of them and then just turn them loose and say, go be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God had a purpose in delivering them. His purpose doesn't end with deliverance.

In other words, deliverance is the beginning in the same way that recruiting and enlisting Marines is not an end in itself. Military personnel are recruited and enlisted or commissioned or given a warrant because there is a purpose for them. There is a mission.

There is a calling. There is a need for them. And that is just the initial phase of procuring, acquiring and granting training and opportunity to these people to do something in the service of the nation.

In the same way, salvation is not an end in itself. In this context, sanctification, being made a saint through the work of Jesus Christ is not an end in itself. God's not done when we get saved.

We are saved for a purpose. We are delivered out of slavery to sin and into service to God for a reason. There are things to be accomplished.

God has purposes. So when it says that the clothing for the bride, the fine linen, white and clean are the righteous deeds of the saints, the bride was engaged, the bride was identified and brought into relationship with the groom. But to be prepared for her role as bride and ultimately as wife, she has to prepare herself.

And these righteous deeds of the saints prepare the sanctified ones for future opportunities and service and function. It is preparation. It is qualification to enter into this role.

And so this helps us, I think, understand a little bit more about what this garment represents and why the lack of it is such a big deal. Isn't it interesting that in Jesus' parable, the king does not say, friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? He is speechless. So the king turned to his servant and said, run, fetch a garment and bring it for this man.

Because it's not really about the garment. And again, what we're going to see this morning will help us understand why this is so important to understand. God, in representative form here as the king, couldn't he easily say, Elihu, run, fetch this man a garment.

I don't want anyone in here that doesn't have the festive apparel. The man is held accountable for his failure to prepare himself, to adorn himself. And the king's beef with the man is not a simple lack of garment, which he could easily remedy.

He could say, bind him hand and foot and put the wedding garment on him, then turn him loose, bind him hand and foot, put the wedding garment on him, prop him up in the corner. I will not have anyone in here that this would be effectual calling. This would be pervenient grace.

Don't let him get away, tackle him, get the wedding garment on him. But he doesn't. The man is held accountable for his decision to not put on the garment when it was offered.

And it was clearly offered. So, this is not unique to the New Testament. It's not like, well, how could anyone have understood this? Because that's from Revelation 19, which hasn't been written when Jesus gives the parable.

You can go back to Isaiah 61 10, which says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with jewels.

Isaiah 61 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God.

Remember how the previous behavior, the treatment of the servants by the initial invitees was a reflection on their attitude toward the king himself and by extension toward the king's son and the king's bride. The flippant disregard of the invitation by some, the active rejection and hostility and violence against the messengers by others is symptomatic. It's not, I just really don't like weddings.

It's, I really don't like this king. That's the problem. And if someone were to make it into the banquet hall and still harbor enough disregard for the king to not accept his proffered robe, there is a lingering infection there.

Here's someone who still partakes of that attitude, not as hostile as the servant killers who had their city burned and they themselves destroyed, not as flippant as the ones who went another way. This one has made an initial response, but there's still that taint. There's still that lack of regard for the king and for the occasion and for the requirements that it entails.

This is really important to understand. It's not the mechanics. It's the attitude that drives

the details of this story that is in view.

So, friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe? He is speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, bind him hand and foot and throw him into the darkness, which is outside. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, grinding of teeth.

This we have seen several times in our preceding videos, but in this preceding context, you remember in Matthew chapter 8, verse 12, way back in chapter 8, when Jesus has been dealing with the Roman centurion, you can go back to Matthew chapter 8, verse 5. Jesus entered Capernaum. A centurion came to him, pleading with him, saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home, paralyzed, dreadfully tormented. Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him.

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. Only speak a word and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me.

I say to this one, go, and he goes. We just had the parable of the two sons. The father says, will you go work in the field? And the son says, yes, I will.

But then he did not go. The other one initially says, no, I will not. But afterward he went.

Which one does the will? Which one fulfills and honors the authority? I say to another, come and he comes. To my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard it, he marveled and said to those who follow, assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.

And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the darkness which is outside. This is Matthew 8, 5 through 13.

The sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Identical vocabulary, identical phrase applied to the very same situation.

Many will come from east and west and sit down in the kingdom. Very similar to this wedding banquet parable. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the darkness outside.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, go your way as you have believed. So let it be done for you.

And his servant was healed that same hour. We saw this in Matthew chapter 13, the parable of the wheat and the tares. Jesus tells that parable, then he tells a couple of others, kind of like the parable of the seed and the soils.

And then the disciples come later and say, explain to us that parable. So when Jesus sent the multitude away in Matthew 13, 36, he went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. Do you remember that? A man sowed good seed in his field, but at night an enemy came and sowed tares.

The servants come and report this to the field's owner and they say, what do you want us to do? And he said, let them grow together until the harvest. Then the servants go in and gather the tares first into bundles and they are burned. Then he says, gather the wheat into the barn.

Disciples say, explain it. He answered and said to them, this is 1337 of Matthew. He who sows the good seed is the son of man.

The field is the world. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The son of man will send out his angels.

They will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness and will cast them into the furnace of fire, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

In that same chapter, just a few verses down, this is Matthew 1347. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which when it was full, they drew to shore and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just and cast them into the furnace of fire, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Again, in Matthew, we will see it coming up in the next few pages, Matthew chapter 24 and the parable of the faithful and wise servant or the wicked and lazy servant, whichever you want to choose here, Matthew 24, 45, who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his master made ruler over his household to give the household, them in the household, food in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

Assuredly, I say to you, he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, my master is delaying his coming and begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Finally, we'll see this in Matthew 25 when we get to the parable of the talents. Very fascinating parable. We've looked at it several times.

I will just remind you that after dealing with the three servants, the one with five talents, the one with three and the one with the single talent who dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent and did not use his abilities to do something with what he was given, the master says, you wicked and lazy servant. This is Matthew 25, 26. You wicked and lazy servant.

You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed, question mark. So then you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers. And at my coming, I would have received back my own with interest.

Then he says to his other servants, take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has more will be given and he will have abundance. But from him who does not have even what he has will be taken away and cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. We'll be there very soon. But notice in how many contexts it is clear that there is not a stranger relationship involved when someone ends up in the outer darkness.

This is a servant to a master who has responsibilities. He has an identical relationship to the master, to the Lord or to the King as all of the others who are accepted and who are approved. Very same relationship, whether they've responded to an invitation or whether they are servants in the household, it is whether or not they recognize the authority of the King, the authority of the master, the authority of the owner or not, whether they take the opportunity and make something of it themselves.

This is not a lack of faith. It is not a lack of acknowledgement in the salvation sense. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and now shall be saved.

That is responding to an invitation that is recognizing that God is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. This is responsibility after this is once you have been delivered from Egypt, are you going to honor God, glorify him and obey him, enter the land, take it and accomplish his purpose or not? If you respond to enlistment or you respond to commission and then you go no further, there is a responsibility that has been failed past the point of salvation. That is what is in view in these weeping and gnashing of teeth passages in every single case.

And ours is certainly no exception here in Matthew chapter 22. So with regard to this robe, we want to be sure we're putting it on and that we fully understand what that means, both in Jesus parable and certainly by application for ourselves. So we see, first of all, that there is great emphasis at the end of this parable.

This is why I treat it almost as a separate parable, because the emphasis here is on the man's responsibility. Friend, how did you come in here without putting this garment on? And the man is held accountable. The king doesn't say, which one of my servants failed to bag this man in a wedding garment before he came into the banquet hall.

It fixes responsibility on the individual. No excuses, no extenuating or mitigating circumstances are sought by the king. Did they not have one in your size? Did they run out before you came through the line? Were you too hot? Can I get you a chair? Were you afraid you would spill something? Were you didn't want to soil a royal robe? The this picture that Jesus presents us fixes responsibility, and by extension, we as believers are accountable and responsible for what we do with what we have been given.

You can anticipate this concept being brought to the center even more fully when we get to chapter 25 and the parable of the talents. Something is given that the master doesn't send his servants out and say, go earn a talent and then see what you can do with it. They are given the initial investment and instructed to make something of it according to their ability.

Not everyone's ability is the same. That's why there's a different number of talents. So responsibility.

And by failing the responsibility, there is concomitant guilt. The man is guilty. He is judged by the king and found guilty.

So, A, there is responsibility. B, failing the responsibility incurs personal responsibility, guilt. And C, that failure and that guilt is judged.

It is punished. There are negative consequences for failing the responsibility, failing to do something with what is provided. There's no getting around it.

That's what this section of the parable emphasizes. The question is, what then does this robe represent? There are replete passages in the Old Testament and the New. It would not have been difficult in any way, shape or form for people to understand when Jesus presented this parable, what it meant.

Just a small sampling. Job 29, 14. I put on righteousness and it clothed me.

My justice was like a robe and a turban. Job 29, 14. Psalm 132, 9. Let your priests be clothed with righteousness and let your saints shout for joy.

Priests clothed with righteousness. These spotless linen garments that the priests were to put on in the service of God, in the presence of God, are characterized as righteousness. Isaiah chapter 11, verse 5. Righteousness shall be the belt of his loins and faithfulness the belt of his waist.

Isaiah 61, 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. This is the one I read you earlier.

My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and a bride adorns herself with jewels. In our New Testament epistles, this theme is picked up and carried forward. Paul does it in Romans 13, 14.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. Galatians chapter 3, verse 27. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Ephesians 4, 22 through 24. Put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts. Put on the new man which is created according to God in true righteousness and holiness.

Discard the old, put on the new. I would add to this list what we saw in our Zacharias study when you have the picture of the priest standing there, take off his filthy robes, put on righteous robes. It's implicit in that passage as well.

Colossians 3, 8 through 14. You yourselves are to put off all of these. Here's the garment we don't want to try to enter into these glorious realms wearing.

Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him, renewed in knowledge of the one who created him. Once again, this is Colossians 3, 8 through 14.

Verse 11, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. Very helpful to know what it is we put on.

What is this garment? It's provided to us because, of course, this is the fruit of the Spirit. Colossians 5, 22 and 23. Revelation 19, 8, once again, the bride is arrayed in these garments made of fine linen, clean and bright, which are the righteous acts of the saints, but the ability to produce these expressions of righteousness is given to us.

We don't have any ability in that area that we do not receive from God, but it needs cultivation. It needs knowledge. It needs the support and enablement of God's Holy Spirit and the living and powerful Word of God.

The power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Word of God and the Spirit of God. We are powerless when we are in the grip of sin. We are powerful when we are in Christ and have that spiritual enablement that Paul talks about when he says, I

can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

This is the garment and you put it on before you walk into the banquet hall, not during. Before, before is now. If we do not want to find ourselves in the darkness, which is outside weeping, grinding our teeth.

I have to think that part of this is in frustration with self. Have you ever just been kicking yourself due to a failure or a lapse or a shortcoming or a a bad patch? This is the grinding of teeth. I think much of this is self-inflicted suffering, recognizing what the opportunity was and having failed to exploit it, being too busy, too apathetic, too distracted.

And there are those which we're going to see when we come back from the break who are actively hostile. It's hard to believe, but it is true and we will see it. We certainly, I think, can take a lesson from these who mistreat the messengers and end up being destroyed by the king.

And there is a strong, immediate, current analog to that going on today. And we'll talk about it when we come back from the break. But I want to end on a positive note.

Look at what the great opportunity is. We are still alive and breathing air. God's word is before us.

God's spirit is within us. And we have every opportunity to not just have the simple, basic wedding garment, but to have a wonderful, glory-reflecting presence in God's future kingdoms. What an opportunity.

What a privilege. What a shame to miss it. So we're not going to do that.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to reach back a little bit in this parable and take one final look at the hostile. There is a very sobering parallel in the modern time, and we need to take a look at it.

We need to be aware of it. We need to have our shield up because there are some fresh, fiery darts of the wicked one headed toward believers like you and me right now. The darts are in the air as we speak.

We'll see it when we come back.