

Matthew 22:1-14

March 15, 2017

Midweek Lent 3 – I am clothed ... because of Jesus

-all through this Lenten season we have been pursuing an understanding of how a person's encounter with Jesus will affect them

-how will it change them?

-how will it effect their past?

-how will it change their future?

-and we have been using parables from the Gospel of Matthew to accomplish this

-the reality is that no one meets Jesus and is unaffected by that encounter

-meeting him can bring forgiveness ... or judgment

-meeting him exposes our future ... I am a sheep, destined for heaven, or a goat, destined for hell

-as we meet Jesus today, we are either clothed ... or exposed

-it bothers me because I hurt for them

-they have an understanding of giving thanks to God, but they don't know who he is or how to approach him

-they are like the ones in the parable who when they hear the invitation, ignore it and walk away

-in our parable tonight, we are first introduced to some who did not want to come and eat and celebrate

-too focused on the worldly

-verse 3 – they “kept on not being willing”

- no time for God
 - no time to take hold of his blessings
 - no time to celebrate his gracious gifts

- what was the result?
 - after multiple invitations, their hearts were exposed
 - they were passed over and reaped the wrath of the king
 - history tells us that the Pharisees and others who rejected the invitation of God to come to the kingdom of God and join in the banquet, would see the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A. D.
 - this would happen within their generation

- why do people respond to God's invitation the way they do?
 - they kept on not being willing
 - they cared not about the invitation
 - they were too busy
 - they were not worthy

- so, what does worthiness consist in?
 - faith in the words, "given and shed for you"
 - the one that believes these words is truly worthy and well prepared
 - it is true faith in Christ that brings us into the presence of God

- most of those who heard the parable were the Pharisees
 - God's people are the ones who are invited over and over again but refuse to come to the banquet
 - it is as if the whole OT is summed up in this parable

- God came with grace and favour, with mercy and forgiveness
- he invited them again to be his people and he would be their God
- but they paid no attention
- they killed the prophets

-the sad result was that their hearts and their nakedness was exposed ... God's judgement would come
-destruction would rain upon Jerusalem before that generation would pass away

-in Philippians 4, St. Paul describes the joy of the marriage feast
-what do we miss when we neglect the invitation?

- we lose joy
- we lose the nearness of the Lord
- we lose the peace that comes from God
- we lose contentment
- Paul knew what it was to be in need and to have plenty
- he could be content in any and every situation, whether living in plenty or in want

-in Isaiah 61, the prophet describes the wonder of God's grace in words that struggle to describe what God has in store for those he loves

-the coming time and the coming one will usher in a great burst of celebration: *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and*

the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion — to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit”

-Isaiah 25 gives us another picture of the great thanksgiving

-God's people rejoice in his salvation

-God has taken away the shroud of sin and swallowed up death

-but they missed the year of the Lord's favour and were met instead with the day of vengeance of our God

-as our parable continues, the king invites others to come in

-and they did not deserve to come either

-but such is the heart of God ... to reach and draw in the unworthy

-you too stand unworthy, yet you have been invited to the wedding feast

-do you know when the wedding feast is set to begin?

-is it following the day of judgement?

-does it start with the ascension of Christ?

-when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are reminded that it is a foretaste of the feast to come

-it is the feast of victory

-we already join with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven

- they sing Holy, holy, holy
- we sing hosanna, hosanna, hosanna
 - and the song of the angels and the song of the redeemed melt together into one glorious song of praise

-those who are then invited and brought in from the highways had no particular qualifications or associations

-but just then, the parable throws us a hook

-one who was there was still not worthy

-there was one without wedding clothes?

-what do we need for acceptance at the wedding?

-what makes us worthy?

-Gal 3:27 - for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

-Isa 61:10 - I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

- Zech 3:3-4 - Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

-why does the accused remain silent?

-Rom 3:19 - Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

-how can we stand acceptable before God now and on the day of judgement?

-Rom 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

-how does this fit with theme of thanksgiving?

-whatever does not come from faith is sin

-without faith it is impossible to please God

-to celebrate God's gifts without faith in Christ is an affront to God

-only when we are in Christ, dressed in his righteousness, can we stand in his presence

-otherwise we are left out

-our God is not a God far away, but a God close by

-he invites and invites and invites

-do we value God's invitation of grace?

- do we celebrate the receiving and the sharing of it?
- do we give God continued praise?

- Hebrews 2:3 asks the right question: “How shall we escape if we ignore such great salvation?”

- “the kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer, of itself, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also”

- self-centered pride is at the heart of those who decline the invitation
 - their personal business is more important than the king’s invitation
 - they considered the wedding unworthy of their time and dignity

- when we do not fear, love and trust in God above all things, our pride becomes our god

- one guest, having been clothed, was not now wearing wedding clothes
- in Esther 6:8, the one the king was going to honour was given a royal robe to wear
- in Isaiah 61:10 God’s people are clothed in garments of salvation

- by not wearing the garment he insults the king and is cast out
- wear the suit of righteousness Jesus bought for you on Calvary and put on you at your baptism
 - without the suit, you stand before God exposed

- abandon all attempts to make yourself right with God, since that kind of righteousness is nothing more than filthy rags
- the parable in our text today follows in a group of parables that Jesus told the week he was crucified
- the were predictive parables that showed what would happen to those who rejected Jesus as Saviour and Lord
- they were addressed to the Jews, the Pharisees and Chief Priests
 - Jesus still wanted them to recognize their sin and turn from it
 - this was the one last invitation before they killed the messenger
 - he wanted them to find salvation in him
- the parables also serve as warnings for us
 - God again and again invites us to draw near
 - are you listening, or will you be among those invited ... but left out?
- why did the invited guests end up excluded?
 - they greeted the invitation with apathy and neglect
 - ho, hum
 - their personal business was more important than the king's invitation
 - they considered the whole thing unworthy of their time
- what kept them away?
 - they paid no attention ... what an epitaph!
- it wasn't as if they didn't know the invitation was coming
 - other things were more important
- what keeps us from God's invitation?
 - serving family is serving God and is pleasing to him

- your daily work is serving God and is pleasing to him
- enjoying God's creation and the life he has given is pleasing to God
 - but only when they are built on a right relationship with him

- trouble comes when we pay no attention to him
 - when they take the place of our relationship with him
 - when they hurt our relationship with him
 - when they become more important than our relationship with him
 - then we run the risk of missing the party, missing the banquet, missing heaven

- we run the risk of falling under the wrath of God
 - of being counted with those who did not deserve to come

- why were they unworthy?
 - not because God didn't give his grace, but because they rejected his grace and considered other things more important

- what have you done with God's invitations?
 - I made the question plural on purpose, because he had given us many invitations

- “Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened”
 - God has invited us to pray
 - he loves to listen and promises to hear
 - the hymn writer says, “O, what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer

- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”
 - in those weary and burdensome times, have you come, or have you thought yourself capable of carrying the burden?

- “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will rescue you”
 - in troubled times, have you come?
 - you’ve been invited to come
 - why do we pay no attention?
- God invites us to confess our sins and promises forgiveness
 - and we pay such little attention
- first impression of this parable is that this parable isn’t about you and me
 - it’s about those dastardly Pharisees and teachers of the law

- but it is about us
 - the first invitation to the heavenly banquet came in baptism
- your sins were forgiven
- you were clothed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus himself
 - that righteousness is our wedding clothes
- he repeats the invitation again as he invites you to his supper and as he speaks the words of forgiveness in the Gospel

- we need to hear his invitation and come and feed
 - the next invitation might be to heaven itself

- what can we learn from this parable?
- God’s invitations are many
 - the God of heaven and earth bids us to come to him

- to pray
 - to find help in time of need
 - to praise him
 - to join him in the eternal heavenly banquet
 - he has prepared the banquet
 - he has prepared us, washing us clean from sin, covering us with the perfectness of Christ
- we don't deserve his gracious invitations
- he offers them freely for us to take hold of and trust
- if we pay no attention to his invitations
- if we think there will always be another time
 - if we consider them of little value
 - then we insult his grace and risk putting ourselves outside of salvation
- but if we listen, if we heed the invitation
- if by faith we put on the righteousness of Christ, then we have place at the heavenly banquet and the marriage feast