

Your Invitation to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb

Isaiah 25:6-9; Philippians 4:4-13; Matthew 22:1-14

19th Sunday after Pentecost A.D. 2020

In Jesus name. The 1st verse of our Gospel Reading asks us to understand the context of this parable. It is Tuesday of Holy Week. From His Baptism to this point, Jesus has used His more-than-2-year earthly ministry of preaching, teaching and performing miracles to proclaim His Deity and to predict His suffering, death and resurrection. His disciples believed in Him, but most of the Jewish leaders did not. 2 days prior to our Gospel Reading, on the Sunday of Holy Week, Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. At the Mount of Olives Jesus had 2 of His disciples fetch a pair of donkeys.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put *on* them their *cloaks*, and he sat on *them*. Most of the *crowd* spread *their* cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:6-9 ESV)

Thus Jesus descended the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday, crossed the Kidron Valley and entered Jerusalem. "And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.'" (Matthew 21:10-11 NKJV) "...Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve." (Mark 11:11 NKJV) Back on the Mount of Olives.

"Now the next day," (Mark 11:12 NKJV) that is, Monday of Holy Week, Jesus and His disciples returned to Jerusalem, and Jesus cleansed the temple:

Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He *healed* them. But *when* the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were *indignant* and said to Him, "Do You *hear* what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you *never* read, 'Out of the mouth of babies and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?" *Then* He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. (Matthew 21:12-17 NKJV)

Back on the Mount of Olives. On the 3rd day, on Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus returned to the city of Jerusalem in the morning, and the Jewish leaders were still very upset with His cleansing of the temple.

Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what *authority* are You doing these things? And *who* (Pause.) gave *you* this authority?" But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you *one* thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: (Pause.) The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we *fear* the multitude, for *all* count *John* as a prophet." So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "*Neither* will I tell *you* by what authority I do these things." (Matthew 21:23-27 NKJV)

Then to point out the error in their thinking, Jesus tells 2 parables about vineyards. First He tells the Parable to the Two Sons. Jesus said:

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, '*I will not*, but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the *second* and said likewise. And he answered and said, '*I go*, sir,' but he did not go. Which of two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him." (Matthew 21:28-32 NKJV)

Jesus' point *is* that the Jewish leaders are in rebellion against the authority of God Himself. The point of Jesus' Parable of the Two Sons *needed* reinforcement, because although the Jewish leaders understood the parable, they still did not repent nor believe in Jesus. Therefore Jesus told the Parable of the Tenants, which is another parable about a vineyard, but this time Jesus puts Himself in the center of the story. Jesus said:

"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And *they* did the *same* to *them*. Finally he sent his *son* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But *when* the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, '*This* is the heir. Come, let us *kill* him and *have* his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the *fruits* in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you *never* read in the Scriptures:

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they *feared* the crowds, because *they* held *him* to be a prophet. (Matthew 21:33-46 ESV)

End of quote. How were the Jewish leaders able to understand *that* these vineyard parables, the Parable of the Two Sons and the Parable of the Tenants, were about them? Probably because they were familiar with Isaiah, chapter 5, where God compares his people to a vineyard. Isaiah, chapter 5, beginning with verse 1:

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:

My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.
He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst,
And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.
What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have *not* done in it?
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes?
And *now*, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.
I will lay it waste;
It shall *not* be pruned or dug,
But *there* shall come *up* briars and thorns.

I will also command the clouds that they rain *no* rain on it.”

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, weeping. (Isaiah 5:1-7 NKJV)

Thus God through the prophet Isaiah compares the nation of Israel to a vineyard, and thus the Jewish leaders quickly understood that both of vineyard parables, the Parable to the Two Sons and the Parable of the Tenants, had been spoken against them. In the Parable of the Tenants, the vineyard is the Jewish nation. The master of the house, who planted the vineyard, is God the Father. The servants are the Old Testament prophets, whom God sent, asking for the worship, which is God's due, and the tenants are the religious leaders, whom God left in charge of taking care of His people. The master's son, of course, is Jesus. Thus, in the Parable of the Tenants, Jesus predicts His own rejection, suffering and death, and He predicts that the Gospel will be taken away from the Jewish leaders and will be given to the Gentiles. Matthew, chapter 21, beginning at verse 42:

Jesus said to them, “Have you *never* read in the Scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. (Matthew 21:42-43 ESV)

End of quote. Although the Jewish leaders understood both the Parable of the Two Sons and the Parable of the Tenants, they were *not* persuaded, but continued in their rejection of Jesus. It is in response to their rejection that Jesus speaks our Gospel Reading this morning, the Parable of the Wedding Feast. Matthew, chapter 22, verse 1, “And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying...” (ESV) (Pause.) Literally in the Greek, verse 1, “And *answering* Jesus again spoke in parables to them, saying...” The Parable of the Wedding Feast is Jesus' response to the rejection of the Jewish leaders, and in this parable He lays out the whole history of salvation. To communicate the *insult* of the Jewish leaders' rejection, Jesus compares the rejection of Himself to stiffing an earthly king on the wedding day of his son. Verse 2, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they *would not* come.” (Verses 2-3 ESV) Can you imagine the *anger* of an earthly king at someone accepting an invitation to the wedding of his son, only to have them *change their mind* on the day of the wedding? How much more the *anger* of God at the Jewish leaders for their rejection of His salvation in Jesus! In Jesus Christ God the Father gave us His very best, His one and only Son to die for us on the cross, to suffer all the punishment we deserve and to give us His own righteousness! The resurrection of Christ proves that God the Father has accepted this sacrifice as the payment for all our sins.

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, as in the Parable of the Tenants, the word, *servants*, is actually the word, *slaves*, and is a picture of the Old Testament prophets who extended the invitation to salvation. Actually in this parable, the Parable of the Wedding Feast, the invitation of the Old Testament prophets has already gone out. The invitation has been accepted. The date is on the calendar, but now the date of the wedding has arrived. The servants, the slaves, in this parable are the New Testament preachers, who are proclaiming that the feast *is now ready*. Salvation has come! This is the feast to which the Jews were invited, as the king said to his slaves in verse 4, "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." (ESV) The feast of salvation was foretold in our Old Testament Reading. Isaiah, chapter 25, beginning with verse 6:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.
And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up *death* forever;
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
It will be said on that day,
"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the LORD; we have waited for him;
let us be glad and rejoice in his *salvation*." (Isaiah 25:6-9 ESV)

End of quote, but many of the Jews ignored the invitation to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Matthew, chapter 22, verse 5, "But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business..." (ESV) Most of the Jewish leaders responded with violence. Verse 6, "...while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them." In verse 7 Jesus predicts the slaughter of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70, as a consequence of their rejection of Jesus. Verse 7, "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city." (ESV) So God turns from the Jewish nation and offers salvation to the Gentiles. The king said to his slaves in verse 8, "The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy." The Jews were not worthy, because they rejected the grace of God, but we, the Gentiles, are also not worthy.

If you would like to get a favor of that, just read the today's Epistle, as something you need to do. Which of us rejoices in the Lord always? Which of us is always reasonable? Which of us is anxious about nothing? Which of us commends everything to God in prayer? Which of us properly controls our thought life? Do we always meditate on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, excellent, or worthy of praise? Do we always practice our faith? We are sinners, just like

the Jews, and we deserve God's wrath and punishment in hell forever, but thanks be to God that He has offered us salvation as well.

God has sent out His preachers to the highways and the byways. In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, the king said to his slaves, verse 9, "Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' 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." (Verses 9-10 ESV)

But you cannot come to Jesus just the way you are. You must be wearing the wedding garment. Verse 11:

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that

The wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ. We cannot approach God based on our own righteousness, based on our filthy rags. By faith we must receive the righteousness of Christ. Only then we will be prepared to enter the gates of heaven and to enjoy the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, which will have no end.

When we appreciate the forgiveness of our sins, the righteousness that is given us by faith, when we know the joys that await us in heaven, then the Epistle Reading is the life we live on this earth. Philippians, chapter 4, verse 4:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7 ESV)

Amen.