

The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

PPT Title

The Wedding Feast

Main Point: God provides everything we need to enter His kingdom.

Key Verse: *But God gives you the gift of eternal life because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done.* – Romans 6:23b

Props: A generous piece of burlap (or a similar drab fabric), large enough to drape over a volunteer like a robe. Brightly colored fabric, perhaps embellished with sequins or beads or glitter, also large enough to drape over a volunteer.

BACKGROUND



Say: Jesus loved to tell stories about the kingdom of God. He loved to compare the kingdom to things that people recognized from their everyday lives. That way, something as huge and awesome and amazing and mind-boggling as God’s kingdom could be understood by anyone who really wanted to know about it.

In one parable, Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, starting small but growing and growing until it is big enough to hold everyone who enters the kingdom. In another parable He said the kingdom of God is like a hidden treasure that is worth more than anything else in the world.

At other times, Jesus taught us what LIFE in the kingdom is like. The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrated that being a good neighbor means showing love and compassion to others, just as Jesus shows love and compassion to us. The Parable of Honor at the Banquet showed that we should think of others as better than ourselves. And the Parable of the Lost Son taught us that when we turn away from our sin and rebellion and choose life in God’s kingdom, that God will run to meet us and celebrate our place in His kingdom.

The parable we are going to look at today is also about the kingdom, but it isn’t like any of the others I just mentioned. It is about some people who were invited to be part of the kingdom, but didn’t accept the invitation. It is also about someone who thought he could enter the kingdom on his own, rather than through the kindness of God. And finally, it is about how God Himself is the only one who can make us ready to enter His kingdom. Let’s read the Parable of the Wedding Feast together in Matthew 22:1-14.

Teacher Note: Jesus told this parable during the Passion Week, after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and at a time when He was facing the severe opposition from Jewish leaders that eventually led to His crucifixion. In an article published on Bible.org, Allen Ross says this of the parable and its context:

“The meaning of this parable in the context of the Lord’s Passion Week, in which He was to be betrayed and crucified, is pretty clear—it condemns the contempt that Israel as a whole (and everyone in general) had (and has) for God’s gracious invitation through Jesus the Messiah.

"The focus of the parable is on the wedding banquet of the Son. The reference is naturally to the Messianic banquet, which is not only mentioned in the New Testament (Rev. 19) but also in the Rabbinic Literature. At the end of the age, the Jewish tradition held, all the people of God—Israel—would enjoy a Messianic banquet in their transition from this life to the life to come...

"The imagery of a wedding banquet turns to the serious message when the man without the proper wedding clothes is not merely thrown out of the banquet, but is bound hand and foot, and cast into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is obviously the judgment scene that Jesus repeated so often with these very words. Thus the banquet is the celebration of those who enter the kingdom, and the exclusion is the judgment of God for those who reject the invitation of grace."

AN INVITATION REJECTED

Say: *Jesus told them more stories. He said, "Here is what the kingdom of heaven is like. A king prepared a wedding dinner for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the dinner. The servants told them to come. But they refused.*

"Then he sent some more servants. He said, 'Tell those who were invited that I have prepared my dinner. I have killed my oxen and my fattest cattle. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding dinner.'

"But the people paid no attention. One went away to his field. Another went away to his business. The rest grabbed his servants. They treated them badly and then killed them." – Matthew 22:1-6

Teacher Note: In verse 6, Jesus said the king's servants were treated badly and killed when they issued the invitation to the wedding feast. This is likely a reference to the murders of the prophets, something that Jesus speaks passionately about in Matthew 23:37, condemning the Pharisees and the teachers of the law for continuing the work that the Old Testament prophet-killers started: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. But you would not let Me!"



Say: Can you imagine REFUSING to attend the wedding of the king's son? The people in this parable had received an invitation to what was probably the most important social event of their lives! Many years ago, England's Prince Charles married a beautiful young lady—Princess Diana. Their wedding was all that people could talk about for weeks before it happened. On the morning that they exchanged wedding vows, 750 MILLION people worldwide watched the ceremony on television. It was a fairy tale wedding that everyone wanted to witness. What if you had been invited to the amazing banquet that the Queen of England hosted after the wedding? Would you have refused to attend? I don't think so!



In this parable, the king himself invited many people to his son's wedding feast, so the preparations took a very long time. When only a couple of people are coming to dinner, one chicken might feed everyone at the table. When 10 or 12 people are coming to dinner, you might cook a bunch of hamburgers on the grill. But when thousands of people are coming to your feast, you have to cook and prepare for weeks or months to get everything ready. The parable says that the king killed all his oxen and fattest cattle. That's a lot of food!



Finally the day arrived when the delicious food was ready. The decorations were hung and the musicians were seated and ready to play the royal music. So the king sent his servants out to tell the people that the party was ready! This was actually their second invitation, because Jesus told us that they had already been invited before the

preparations began. The first invitation was saying, "There's going to be a dinner." The second one, delivered by the king's servants, was saying, "Dinner is served. Everyone is welcome!"

But what happened when the servants went out to announce that the feast was finally ready? Let's look again at Matthew 22:5-6... "*But the people paid no attention. One went away to his field. Another went away to his business. The rest grabbed (the king's) servants. They treated them badly and then killed them.*"



Application: The king in the parable really wanted people to come to the wedding feast, so he gave them not one, but two invitations. And he even sent his servants to remind people that the time had come to enjoy the delicious food and beautiful preparations. He didn't want a single person to miss out of the party! But the parable says "the people paid no attention."

Have you ever been rejected? Maybe you invited someone to come over to your house to play and they made up a lame excuse why they couldn't. Or maybe you asked your older brother or sister to watch your favorite TV show with you, but they laughed at you for asking. How do you feel when you are rejected? *Sad. Mad. Embarrassed. Hurt.*

Let's talk for a minute about the deeper meaning of this parable so we can see what the people were really rejecting when they refused to attend the wedding feast.



Say: You might have already guessed that the king in the parable represents God. And Jesus Himself told us at the beginning of the parable that the wedding feast represents the kingdom of God. What could the invitation in the parable represent? Well, the prophets in the Old Testament had been telling the Jewish people for many, many years that the Messiah, the Savior who would take away their sin, was coming. Prophets spoke the words that God told them to speak, so you might say that God issued His kingdom invitation through the prophets. Then, another prophet, John the Baptist, came along and told people to turn away from their sins, because the kingdom of God was almost ready! And finally, Jesus came. He WAS the Messiah that everyone had heard about for so long.

But when Jesus started teaching and performing miracles and telling people that He was the only way to enter the kingdom, the Pharisees and many other Jewish people refused to follow Him. It was just like in the parable. The Jewish people had been invited for generations to have a relationship with the Messiah and enter the kingdom of God, but when that Messiah—Jesus—was finally there, they rejected the invitation.

If you feel sad and angry and insulted when someone rejects you, how much more sad and angry do you think God must feel when people reject His invitation to know Jesus and enter the kingdom of God?

In the parable, the people who rejected the invitation didn't even have good excuses! One went to work in his field. Another went to conduct business. There is nothing wrong with working, of course, but we should never be too busy to obey God and follow His Son Jesus. Then the parable says the rest of the people grabbed the king's servants, treated them badly, and killed them! This is exactly what happened to many of the prophets in the Bible who told the people that the Messiah was coming. Plus, just a few days after He told this parable about the kingdom, Jesus Himself was seized and treated badly and killed.

Say: So, the king in the parable had every reason to be angry with the people He invited to the wedding feast. But what will he do with the wonderful feast he so lovingly prepared for the guests? Let's keep reading in Matthew 22:7-10 to see what happened next.

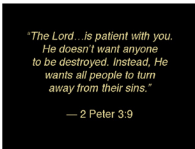
DIFFERENT GUESTS AT THE FEAST

Say: "The king became very angry. He sent his army to destroy them. They killed those murderers and burned their city."

"Then the king said to his servants, 'The wedding dinner is ready. But those I invited were not fit to come. Go to the street corners. Invite to the dinner anyone you can find.' So the servants went out into the streets. They gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad. Soon the wedding hall was filled with guests."

— Matthew 22:7-10

The king was so angry, not just because the people he invited rejected his kindness, but because they murdered his servants! So now it was too late for the people who refused to come to the feast. The king sent his army to destroy them. The king took the people's rejection very seriously, didn't he? In the same way, God takes it very seriously when we refuse to accept His invitation to be part of His kingdom. He is a very patient and loving God, for sure.



2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord...is patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, He wants all people to turn away from their sins."

Ask: Did God offer an invitation to all those people? Yes! But they each chose not to come. Likewise, God offers us so many opportunities to follow Jesus and enter the kingdom. But just like the king in the parable, there comes a time when God says "enough." That's why it is so important to listen to and obey His words the first time.



It's really important, though, to understand what the king did next. After he destroyed the people who rejected his first invitation, the king could have canceled the feast completely. But the king knew that a wedding feast as wonderful as his should be enjoyed by SOMEONE! He desired the company of people who WANTED to celebrate with him. So the king sent some more servants out, this time telling them to bring in the people you would least expect to find at a royal banquet. The servants invited everyone they could find on the streets...the poor, the crippled, the blind. Sinners and tax collectors. Moms and dads and grandparents. Children. People just like you and me.

The guests who accepted the king's invitation this time must have been so amazed when they entered the wedding hall. All that wonderful food! All those wonderful preparations! And the king's son was there, too, to share the celebration feast.

Application: You know what? You and I are invited to the king's wedding feast, too. God has offered us the chance of a lifetime, the chance to enjoy all the beauty and abundance of the kingdom of God. That is God's mercy in action. He may be broken-hearted about the people who refuse to honor His invitation, but He never stops inviting others into His kingdom.



And once we know that God wants everyone to be part of His kingdom, we should be like the servants in the parable, going out into the streets and inviting everyone to the feast. Romans 10:15 says, "...how can anyone preach without being sent? It is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" That's us! We have been sent to tell everyone the good news of Jesus and invite them to be part of His kingdom, too.

Say: There is one more really important thing that happens in this parable. We can find out what it is in Matthew 22:11-14.

GOD GIVES US WHAT WE NEED TO ENTER HIS KINGDOM

Say: "The king came in to see the guests. He noticed a man there who was not wear-

ing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man couldn't think of anything to say.

"Then the king told his servants, 'Tie up his hands and feet. Throw him outside into the darkness. Out there people will sob and grind their teeth.'

"Many are invited, but few are chosen." — Matthew 22:11-14



It may seem strange to you that the king would be so angry about a person's clothes. But think about this: in Jesus' time, it was the host's job to provide the proper clothing for a wedding feast like this. The people at that time simply didn't have a different outfit for every occasion. They had their work clothes and that was it. And everything was brown, or tan, or some other drab color. The man who wasn't wearing the king's colorful, feast-day clothing really stuck out!

The king approached the man kindly, calling him friend. Perhaps the king thought it was just a mistake that the guest hadn't yet put on the king's clothing. But when the king asked him, the man had nothing at all to say. He didn't thank the king for providing better clothing. And he didn't ask the king's forgiveness for failing to change his clothes. The man obviously thought that his own clothing was good enough.

Remember when we looked deeper into the parable's meaning before? Well, let's do that with the man's clothes, too. In this story, the man believed his own garments were good enough. That is just like someone who wants to enter the kingdom of God in his own way, because he doesn't understand that the good things he does and the pretty words he says are not enough. Nothing we say or do can ever be good enough to earn us a place in God's kingdom.



But the beautiful clothes that the king offered his guests represent the one thing that enables us to live forever in the kingdom of God. They represent the salvation that Jesus bought for us when He died on the cross.

Isaiah 61:10b says, *We are joyful because we belong to our God. He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes. He has put robes of godliness on us. We are like a groom who is dressed up for his wedding. We are like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels.*

Application: There is nothing we have and nothing we do that can make us deserving of a spot at God's banquet table. Even if we accept His invitation to feast in the kingdom, we aren't good enough to actually enter the kingdom on our own. **Say:** I need a volunteer to help me demonstrate this truth. **Have the volunteer come to the front of the class, then drape or wrap the burlap (or other drab fabric) around them to simulate a robe.** This ugly robe represents all the things we do to be "good" or "godly" (Isaiah 64:6). But you can see that these robes are NOT appropriate clothing for a feast! But when we believe that Jesus, God's own Son, died on the cross so that our sins might be forgiven, it's like we receive a new set of robes. **Drape the brightly colored or embellished fabric on top of the drab fabric, forming a new robe.** Now, suddenly, we are perfectly prepared to enter the wedding feast in God's kingdom! **Remove the fabric from the volunteer and ask them to return to their seat.**



Jesus suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin once and for all. And if we believe that is true, we will wear His salvation like a set of beautiful wedding clothes forever. God graciously gives us everything we need to enter His kingdom.

PPT Key Verse

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