

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, October 9-15 (A) – Matthew 22:1-14

The Challenge of Discipleship: *Invitation*

Focus Question: *When was the last time you invited someone to attend church or to have a conversation related to a faith issue?*

word of life

“Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.”

Matthew 22:9 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 22:1-14

This parable (or parables) of the wedding banquet immediately follows the parable of the wicked tenants (Matthew 21:33-46). Jesus continues to speak to the religious leaders who want to arrest him (Matthew 21:46).

The parable of the wedding banquet of the king's son has significant political overtones which can be easily overlooked. Think about it ... It would be imperative for those invited to attend the wedding feast of the king's son, not only to show respect, gratitude and honor for the invitation, but also as an expression of loyalty to the heir to the throne. To turn down such an invitation would not only be socially rude; it would be politically rebellious (and perhaps even politically suicidal). Allegiance is at stake. Excuses would hardly be acceptable; and unlike the parallel parable in Luke's Gospel (Luke 14:15-24) where a variety of excuses are given, those invited in Matthew's parable offer none. Instead, they “made light” (the Greek word implies a response of apathy and disregard) of the invitation (vs. 5).

1. *What excuses might have been offered?*

The political rebellion is magnified as the king's slaves are mistreated and killed by those who were invited to the banquet. In light of such insurrection, the king's harsh response makes a bit more sense. The gracious invitation of the king to the wedding banquet is then extended to everyone, both good and bad alike (vs. 9-10).

2. *How do you explain the king's response?*
3. *What accusation for the leaders do you find in the parable?*

The banquet hall is filled. And then the focus of the parable turns to the attire of the wedding guests. Why the concern about dress? There is a scriptural reference to a king providing robes for the invited guests. (See 2 Kings 10:22) In a similar way, many churches provide “proper” robes for choir members, acolytes or assisting ministers. And many times in Paul's writings, the Christian's life is described as “putting on” the new life of faith. (See Romans 13:12-14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24.) The proper garment would indicate not only a willingness to fully join in the king's celebration but could also represent “putting on” the Christian life, bearing the proper fruit, and receiving the “garment of salvation” (Isaiah 61:10) from God.

4. *If the issue isn't clothing, what is the point of the parable?*

The imagery of the wedding banquet is a common theme in the Old and New Testament; for example, Isaiah speaks of a promised feast of rich foods which God will provide (Isaiah 25:6-9). Revelation 19 describes the final, victorious banquet with the Lamb. Invitation, apathy, rejection, response – all echo in this parable. Clearly for Matthew, the new community of the church was a strange assortment of people. God acted with a marvelous disregard for the old rules of what was acceptable and bestowed grace overflowing.

5. *Where do we find ourselves in the parable?*

word *among us*

It comes in the mail. It's usually fairly easy to identify, because unlike other pieces of mail, it's usually in a heavier, more stately envelope. Often times, there are embossed letters on it, making it appear almost regal. Sometimes the address is written in a fancy script, signifying something important. As you open the envelope, there is often an inner envelope to be opened as well, as if to say that the content of the envelope is so precious, so special, that it must not be creased or stained in its delivery.

Once the envelopes are finally opened, the letters on the parchment, printed in broad, bold strokes, often begin with these or similar words: "The honor of your presence is requested" And oftentimes, at the bottom of the invitation are four letters asking for a response: RSVP.

Today's parable, like the parables before it, is filled with grace and challenge for the follower of Jesus. There is a gracious invitation to everyone to join in the feast of the kingdom. We are invited to the table God has prepared for us. Everyone is included by this loving and gracious God. Everyone ... including those we least expect.

1. *What choice does God give us to respond?*
2. *How and when have you received invitations from God?*
3. *Do you believe every person has received an invitation from God? In other words, has everyone heard the good news of God in Jesus Christ?*

But any invitation – even one without "RSVP requested" – calls for a response. Will we go? Will we enjoy the company? Who will be there? What shall we wear?

4. *How will we respond?*
5. *What excuses might we offer God?*

As we open ourselves to receive Christ in our hearts ... as we come willingly to the table, prepared to discard the old clothes of hatred, jealousy, and self-righteousness ... as we quit thinking we have to earn the ticket to the meal but willingly accept the banquet that has been prepared ... we are given a new wardrobe. We are dressed in Christ. We put on compassion, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, and love.

That is the grace note sounding in the Gospel parable. But along with that note is also sounded the note of judgment. Even as God invites, God also gives us the freedom to respond. We can choose to come or not attend the banquet. RSVP is requested.

6. *How might we extend God's invitation to others?*
7. *How can the challenge for modern-day Christians to invite someone to the banquet feast of God be lived out on a daily basis?*

Prayer

Maker of the universe, open our hearts and spirits to your invitation.

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 25:6-9

last word

This week,
invite someone
to church.



Daily Discipleship

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