

THE WEDDING BANQUET

TEXT - MATTHEW 22: vs 1-10, 11-14.

(Note: I read Matthew 22: 1-10 prior to starting the message, and then read vs 11-14 at sermon pg 4)

WE ARE NOW ENTERING THE CHURCH CALENDAR TIME OF LENT. SPANNING 40 DAYS BEFORE EASTER, LENT INVITES BELIEVERS TO REFLECT ON THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. LENT TRACES ITS ORIGINS TO THE EARLY CENTURIES OF CHRISTIANITY, A 40-DAY PERIOD OF FASTING AND PREPARATION BEFORE EASTER, MEANT TO SYMBOLIZE THE 40 DAYS JESUS SPENT FASTING IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE HE WAS TEMPTED BY SATAN YET REMAINED FAITHFUL TO GOD. AS PER OUR TIME OF CONFESSION, MANY HAVE ENTERED INTO A TIME OF PERSONAL SACRIFICE.

SINCE LENT FOCUSES ON THE LIFE OF JESUS, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO LOOK AT MESSAGES GIVEN BY JESUS. JESUS OFTEN SPOKE IN PARABLES. PARABLES ARE SAID TO BE EARTHLY STORIES TOLD WITH A HEAVENLY OR SPIRITUAL MESSAGE. WHEN JESUS WAS ASKED EARLIER WHY HE CHOSE AT TIMES TO SPEAK IN PARABLES, HE REPLIED THAT IT WAS SO THAT ONLY THOSE THAT WERE MEANT TO UNDERSTAND WOULD RECEIVE AND RESPOND TO THE MESSAGE. AND JESUS WAS ALWAYS AWARE OF THE "AUDIENCE" THAT HAD COME TO HEAR HIM.

LUKE 14 ENDED WITH THESE WORDS "*HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR*".

THIS PARABLE TOLD BY JESUS IN MATTHEW 22, IS REALLY PRECEDED BY 2 PARABLES IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, ALL SPEAKING TO AND POINTING TO REPENTANCE. THE FIRST WAS ABOUT 2 SONS ASKED TO GO AND WORK IN THE FATHERS VINEYARD, ONE SAID YES AND DID NOT GO, AND THE OTHER INITIALLY SAID NO, BUT CHANGED HIS MIND AND WENT.

THE SECOND PARABLE WAS ABOUT A VINEYARD WITH A WALL AROUND IT, THAT WAS BEING RENTED TO SOME FARMERS, AND THEN THE LANDLORD CAME TO CLAIM HIS RENT (AT HARVEST TIME), AND THE RENTERS WERE VIOLENT AND WOULD NOT GIVE UNTO THE LANDLORD HIS DUE, EVEN AFTER HE SENT HIS SON TO COLLECT.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE ELDERS WERE LISTENING TO JESUS, KNEW THAT HE WAS POINTING TO THEM, AND STARTED TO QUESTION HIM WITH THESE WORDS "*BY WHAT AUTHORITY ARE YOU DOING THESE THINGS, AND "WHO GAVE YOU THIS AUTHORITY?"*"

A QUESTION THAT SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE ASKED TODAY. WHO IS JESUS ? WHO IS JESUS TO YOU ? IT ULTIMATELY COMES DOWN TO WHAT ONE BELIEVES ABOUT JESUS. AND JESUS RESPONDS TO THESE "QUESTIONS" IN THE TELLING OF 3 PARABLES.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE 3RD PARABLE, JESUS BEGINS WITH

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE A KING WHO PREPARED A WEDDING BANQUET FOR HIS SON.

THIS WAS THE "CALL OF THE KING".

THE KING SENDS OUT HIS SERVANTS "TO THOSE WHO HAD BEEN INVITED TO THE BANQUET TO TELL THEM TO COME, BUT THEY REFUSED TO COME".

THEN THE KING SENT MORE SERVANTS TO AGAIN "CALL THOSE WHO HAD BEEN INVITED". COME.

IN THAT CULTURE, THESE BANQUETS AND FEASTS COULD LAST SEVERAL DAYS. AND THE INVITATIONS WOULD HAVE GONE OUT WEEKS BEFORE THE ACTUAL EVENT. IT WAS SOMEWHAT LIKE A MODERN DAY WEDDING, WHERE YOU RECEIVE YOUR INVITATION IN THE MAIL, BUT THE INVITE IN JESUS TIME WOULD LACK AN EXACT DATE AND TIME FOR THE BANQUET.

BACK THEN THEY DID NOT HAVE MICROWAVES, AND HIGH SPEED COOKING OVENS, SO FURTHER PREPARATION HAD TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE EVERYTHING WOULD BE READY, AND WHEN ALL IS READY, THE KING PERSISTS AND SENDS OUT MORE SERVANTS "TO THOSE THAT HAD BEEN INVITED (AND HAD ALREADY REFUSED), BECAUSE "THE OXEN AND FATTENED CALF HAD BEEN PREPARED, ALL WAS READY..... COME".

THIS KING IS PRETTY GRACIOUS..... TO GO BACK TO THE PEOPLE WHO HAD ALREADY REFUSED, AND CALL THEM TO JOIN HIM AT THE BANQUET.

THIS TIME IT GETS WORSE. "BUT THEY PAID NO ATTENTION AND WENT OFF ONE TO DO THIS, AND ANOTHER TO DO THAT".

AND THE REST, "SEIZED THE SERVANTS, MISTREATED THEM, AND KILLED THEM". NOW THE KING IS ANGRY.

PROVERBS 20: VS 2 – A KING'S WRATH IS LIKE THE ROAR OF A LION, HE WHO ANGERS HIM FORFEITS HIS LIFE."

AND BRINGS JUDGEMENT ON THOSE WHO REJECTED HIS INVITATION. HE SENT HIS ARMY, DESTROYED THEM, AND BURNED THEIR CITY.

THE FIRST PART OF THIS PARABLE IS A STORY OF GRACE AND JUDGEMENT..... SPECIFICALLY ON THE NATION OF ISRAEL.

THE KING IS GOD THE FATHER, THE SON IS JESUS, THE SERVANTS ARE THE PROPHETS AND PRIESTS OF THE O.T., AND THE BANQUET COULD BE WHAT IS DESCRIBED IN REV 19 – AS “**THE WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB**”. THE EVENTUAL BURNING OF THE CITY IS THE FUTURE JUDGEMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN AD70.

BUT THEN JESUS BROADENS THE SCOPE OF THIS PARABLE - THE INVITATIONS CONTINUE, BUT TO A DIFFERENT CROWD.

THE KING SENDS OUT SERVANTS (AGAIN) TO “**GO TO THE STREET CORNERS, AND INVITE TO THE BANQUET ANYONE YOU FIND.**

SO THEY WENT OUT AND GATHERED ALL THE PEOPLE THEY COULD FIND, BOTH GOOD AND BAD, AND THE WEDDING HALL WAS FILLED WITH GUESTS”.

I HOPE THAT YOU CAN SEE THAT THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE GOSPEL **NOW** BEING PREACHED TO ALL PEOPLE. THE KING (GOD THE FATHER) EXTENDS AN INVITATION TO ALL THAT HEAR THE GOSPEL. IT IS A PICTURE OF THE INVITATION COMING TO YOU AND ME.

NOTE HERE THAT THAT THIS PARABLE IS FULL OF INVITATIONS. IN SOME CASES, THE INVITATION WAS IGNORED, REJECTED, OR MET WITH HOSTILITY. IN THIS LAST INVITE, IT WAS ACCEPTED AND FILLED THE WEDDING HALL. GOD’S INVITATION IS EXTENDED TO ALL, THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS, THE CALL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON HEARTS, **BUT ESPECIALLY FOR YOU AND I THIS MORNING**, THE INVITE DEMANDS A RESPONSE ON OUR PART. JESUS WAS POINTING TO THAT IN THE FIRST 2 PARABLES, IN SUGGESTING THAT THE JEWS WERE UNWILLING TO REPENT, AND BELIEVE.

NEVERTHELESS, THE KING OPENS UP THE INVITATION TO CELEBRATE HIS SON, AND THE WEDDING HALL IS FILLED. WHAT A WONDERFUL PICTURE OF **GENEROUSITY**, GRACE AND MERCY. THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, A PLACE WHERE **NO** DOUBT MANY, IF NOT ALL WOULD LIKE TO BE ONE DAY. IF YOU WERE ASKED, WOULD YOU NOT DESIRE TO BE IN HEAVEN ONE DAY ?

PAST STUDIES SHOW THAT MANY DO. INTERESTING STATISTICS - **AMONG BELIEVERS 85 PERCENT** ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE GOING TO HEAVEN. **NON-RELIGIOUS PEOPLE POLLED - 72% BELIEVED IN HEAVEN, AND 77% BELIEVED THEY ARE GOING THERE.** HOWEVER, ONLY **1 IN 10 PEOPLE (10%)** OF THOSE POLLED, BELIEVED THAT JESUS WOULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM MAKING IT TO HEAVEN.

THERE IS A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE **OR** WOULD PREFER THAT THIS PARABLE WOULD END AT VERSE 10. THE JEWS DID, AND SO DO MANY PEOPLE IN HISTORY. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE THAT SOME HERE THIS MORNING PREFER TO STOP AT VERSE 10. BUT JESUS WAS NOT DONE.

READ- MATTHEW 22: VS 11-14.

I PURPOSELY WAITED TIL NOW TO READ VS 11-14, FOR EFFECT AND CLARITY.

THE FOCUS OF THIS PARABLE IS IN FACT JESUS CHRIST. WHO HE IS, AND WHAT HE HAS DONE. THE WEDDING BANQUET IS FOR THE SON. HE IS THE BRIDGE GROOM AND THE BRIDE IS THE CHURCH.

IT IS THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL, THE PINNACLE OF HISTORY, THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF JESUS. IT IS WHAT OUR EASTER IS ALL ABOUT. THE NATION OF ISRAEL FOR THE MOST PART, DID NOT SEE THAT. THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHO JESUS IS. JOHN 1 TELLS US THAT HE CAME TO HIS OWN, BUT HIS OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM.

HOWEVER PARTS OF THIS PARABLE SHOULD HAVE BEEN VERY UNDERSTANDABLE TO THE JESUS AUDIENCE.

JESUS MENTION OF THE "WEDDING CLOTHES OR GARMENT" WOULD NOT HAVE SURPRISED THOSE LISTENING IN THAT CULTURE, BECAUSE A KING OR VERY PROMINENT OR WEALTHY PERSON, WHEN THROWING A WEDDING BANQUET OR FEAST, WOULD PROVIDE ALL THE GUESTS AS THEY ARRIVED WITH A "WEDDING GARMENT" OR SOME TYPE OF GARMENT AS THEY ENTERED THE MAIN HALL.

THIS MAN HAD ENTERED AND WANTED TO BE PART OF THE BANQUET, BUT DID NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED WEDDING GARMENT ON. ***THE KING HAD HIS ATTENDANTS BIND THIS MAN HAND AND FOOT, AND THROW HIM OUTSIDE, INTO THE DARKNESS, WHERE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH.***

THE LANGUAGE USED IMPLIES THAT THIS INVITED GUEST DID NOT HAVE THE CORRECT CLOTHING FOR THE OCCASION, AND WAS CAST INTO HELL. HE WAS NOT GOING TO BE PART OF THE CELEBRATION, THE WEDDING FEAST.

**THROWN OUT BECAUSE HE HAD NO ROBE. NO GARMENT. NO COVERING. AND NO EXCUSE. IT SAYS
“HE WAS SPEECHLESS”.**

UNDERSTAND THIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS WOULD HAVE KNOWN THE SCRIPTURES, AND MORE THAN LIKELY UNDERSTOOD THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “WEDDING GARMENT”.

THEY WOULD KNOW OF ISAIAH 61 : VS 10 -

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 HER JEWELS. ISAIAH 61: 10

OR THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH’S VISION OF JOSHUA STANDING BEFORE THE LORD AND SATAN (THE ACCUSER)

NOW JOSHUA WAS CLOTHED WITH FILTHY GARMENTS, AND WAS STANDING BEFORE THE ANGEL.

THEN THE LORD ANSWERED AND SPOKE TO THOSE WHO STOOD BEFORE HIM, SAYING, “TAKE AWAY THE FILTHY GARMENTS FROM HIM.” AND TO HIM HE SAID, “SEE, I HAVE REMOVED YOUR INIQUITY FROM YOU, AND I WILL CLOTHE YOU WITH RICH ROBES.” ZECHARIAH 3

THE LISTENING AUDIENCE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO ANY NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES, BUT YOU AND I ARE.....

IN GALATIANS 3: VS 27 - BELIEVERS ARE DESCRIBED AS HAVING “CLOTHED OURSELVES WITH CHRIST”.

YOU AND I WOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH REVELATION 7..... ***THERE WAS A GREAT MULTITUDE THAT NO ONE COULD COUNT, FROM EVERY NATION, TRIBE, PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD.....WEARING WHITE ROBES.....***

HE WHO OVERCOMES SHALL BE CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS, AND I WILL NOT BLOT OUT HIS NAME FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE; BUT I WILL CONFESS HIS NAME BEFORE MY FATHER AND BEFORE HIS ANGELS.

THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. THE ROBE PROVIDED BY JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF.

YOU AND I ARE NOW BLESSED TO BE SITTING BEYOND THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

WE KNOW THAT HE HAS FINISHED HIS MISSION AND MINISTRY. THE N.T TELLS US THAT HE CAME TO SAVE SINNERS FROM THEIR SINS, SAVE US FROM THE WRATH OF GOD, AND CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. WE ARE ROLLING UP TO EASTER, TO REFLECT, AND EMBRACE WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR THOSE THAT COME TO HIM.

REMEMBER JESUS OWN WORDS FROM THE CROSS..... IT IS FINISHED.

SO WHO IS THIS MAN "WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT" ?? COULD HE BE SOMEONE HERE THIS MORNING ??

WHAT PREVENTED THIS MAN FROM RECEIVING A GARMENT ??

JESUS POINTED TO IT IN THE FIRST OF THE THREE PARABLES. HE SAID " ***FOR JOHN CAME TO SHOW YOU THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND YOU DID NOT BELIEVE HIM.....AND YOU DID NOT REPENT AND BELIEVE HIM.***"

SALVATION IS WALKING IN THE ASSURANCE THAT THE ASCENDED JESUS CHRIST HAS PROVIDED US WITH THE "ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" AND A PLACE AT THE WEDDING BANQUET.

THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN. THIS WEDDING CRASHER PROBABLY CAME IN WITH HIS OWN IDEAS, HIS OWN REASONS, HIS OWN PHILOSOPHY, HIS OWN WHATEVER. MY GARMENTS ARE FINE, THEY ARE PERFECT. OR.... I PREFER MY OWN CLOTHING (COVERING), ETC.

TODAY, WE ARE CONSTANTLY BEING BOMBARDED WITH ALTERNATE SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHIES, NEW THOUGHTS, NEW THEOLOGIES, NEW IDEAS, AND ALL TO TAKE OUR FOCUS **AWAY FROM** THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH.

JESUS FURTHER ENHANCES THE **IMPORTANCE & PROMINENCE** OF THE "GARMENT" BY TELLING US THAT BOTH THE "GOOD AND THE BAD" ENTER THE FEAST. IN OTHER WORDS, WORKS WERE NOT THE CRITERIA FOR BELONGING TO THE CELEBRATION.

SALVATION IS FREE, **BUT** WE CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM JUST AS WE ARE.

EITHER WE PAY FOR OUR SINS, OR SOMEONE ELSE DOES.... AND **UNDERSTANDING** OUR INABILITY TO PAY **SHOULD LEAD US TO REPENTANCE.**

THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE **KING** AND THE GUEST IS THE FIRST PLACE IN THE PARABLE WHERE WE HAVE A FACE TO FACE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE **KING** AND ANY GUEST. AND WHEN QUESTIONED, IT SAYS THE GUEST WAS SPEECHLESS.

WHAT WILL WE SAY ONE DAY WHEN WE STAND BEFORE THE **KING** OF HEAVEN AND EARTH ??

MAY IT BE THAT WE WILL NOT BE SPEECHLESS. WILL WE HAVE AN ANSWER ?? MAY IT ALSO BE THAT ANY ANSWER DOES NOT START WITH "I" I DID THIS, I DID THAT,BUT MAY IT BE THAT WE ANSWER WITH "HE".

MAY IT BE THAT WE **CLAIM AND POINT TO THE SACRIFICIAL WORK OF JESUS, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, NOT OURS.**

THIS PARABLE IS REALLY A TREMENDOUS LOVE STORY. ONE OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE.

THE **KING** PROVIDES EVERYTHING. HE **REACHES OUT**, HE INVITES, HE INVITES, HE PLANS AND PREPARES THE BANQUET, GETS EVERYTHING READY, AND EVEN PROVIDES THE WEDDING GARMENT. **WHAT A GRACIOUS KING. HE HAS DONE EVERYTHING.**

ALL WE NEED TO DO IS ACCEPT THE GIFT OF HIS SON, JESUS. THE GOSPEL APPEARS SO SIMPLE IN THESE TERMS.

CAN YOU SEE WHY **I JOHN** STATES THAT **GOD IS LOVE ??**

AND **GOD'S LOVE** CONTINUES TO GO FORTH EVEN TODAY. HE CONTINUES TO CALL, TO INVITE, TO RECEIVE, TO ACCEPT, AND FINALLY **OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE THAT JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.**

HEBREWS 7:25 - THEREFORE, HE (THAT IS JESUS) IS ABLE TO SAVE COMPLETELY THOSE WHO COME TO GOD THE FATHER THRU HIM, BECAUSE HE ALWAYS LIVES TO INTERCEDE FOR THEM. " SAVE COMPLETELY..... PAST SINS, PRESENT SINS, AND FUTURE SINS. ALL OF IT. WASHED CLEAN.

AND WHAT DID IT COST THOSE THAT CAME TO THE BANQUET. NOTHING. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

IT COST HIM HIS SON. TO REDEEM OUR SOULS BY HIS BLOOD. AND CLOTHE THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.