

**Entitlement**

October 15, 2017

**Matthew 22: 1-14**

*Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup> "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.'<sup>5</sup> But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'<sup>10</sup> Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup> and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'<sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen."*



[Video – “Stuff People Say” – 2:44]

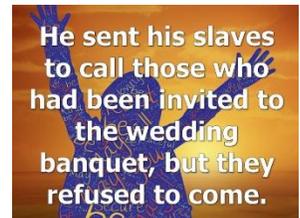
Today we continue our "Enemies of Gratitude" series. Those two in the video we just watched could be the poster children for our series, couldn't they? We laugh at them, true. But we also must admit that at times we too complain or whine about what amounts to nothing at all. We began two weeks ago and looked at how nostalgia can rob our joy and can keep us from seeing God's preferred future for our lives and for our church. Last week we looked at Paul's solution to worry. Pray, pray, pray. Paul encouraged us to rejoice in the Lord always and to bring our requests to God, trusting in Him to lift our burdens and to bring us that peace that passes understanding. Today we jump almost to the other end of the spectrum as we look at "Entitlement". Let us pray.

Today's parable takes place at a wedding - a common theme is Jesus' teachings. In this parable, as is usually the case, the wedding banquet represents the coming kingdom of God. While a wedding is significant to our families today and is a major highlight in our lives, it was several notches higher in Jesus' day. During the time of Jesus there was no more significant events than a wedding. A typical wedding would be followed by feasting that would last for three or four days. The family's honor would be on display for all to see. In today's parable, the significance is even greater. A royal wedding was important. And today, the king's son is getting married. So, to receive an invitation to a royal banquet that would surely be magnificent and extravagant would almost require those who were invited to attend. People would be glad to receive this invitation. Many in Jesus' audience would long to receive such an invitation. So it is maybe curious to us when we read in verse three, "*He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet...*".



If we were invited to a royal or very important event most of us would make a point to put it in the calendar on our phone and set us to remind us twice – once a week before and once the day of the event. But they did not have smart phones or even phones at all. They did not have sticky notes or even calendars to put them on. So the common practice of the day is just what we see in today's parable. The food had been prepared, the hall was decorated, the entertainment was secured – all was nearing readiness. The king sends out his slaves to give the guests who have already accepted the first invitation their standard second invitation. Surely the guests will come running to the royal wedding and the outlandish feast that will follow. But they do not.

Verse three finishes with these words: "*He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come*". There has to be some mistake. The



king sends a second set of slaves with a new message: I the King have prepared the dinner, the fatted calves have been slaughtered, all is ready. Come! But the guests do not care. Some make light of the invitation, and go off to tend to other matters. They find excuses not to attend the wedding banquet. Others who were invited seize, mistreat, and kill the king's slaves. Not only are they not coming, they are showing great disrespect by treating the king's slaves in such a way. The king reacts as we would expect. He is enraged. The king sends off the troops and they kill the murderers and destroy their city. This sounds a bit "Old Testament" doesn't it? But as we dig a little deeper, we must question why they did not come. By simply being invited, did they think themselves above actually having to go? Did their sense of entitlement make it easier to not go?



There is, of course, a connection that we can see with the Old Testament. Just as the king's invitation is rejected, many of the prophets were rejected as well. Samuel and Elijah were but two of many who had to go into hiding to find refuge from those who worshipped idols and false gods. The Old Testament prophets were often rejected by the people and the rulers that they brought God's message to. The same rejection and violence will be brought upon Jesus and on many who come after Him proclaiming the good news of the gospel. Persecutions and crucifixions were to become common for the messengers who went out proclaiming the good news.

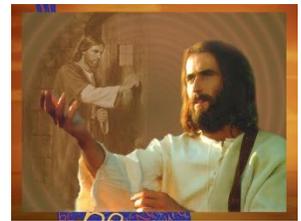
In the New Testament, we find that those who were first invited to be a part of the outpouring of the kingdom of God largely chose instead to reject it. Instead of accepting Jesus' invitation, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious leaders rejected Jesus and His message of hope and love. And when Jesus kept on inviting, He alienated them further and further until they would plot to take His life. For this group of religious elites and for many Jews who followed them, they could not accept Jesus. His invitation to love God and love neighbor in its simplest forms was more than they could envision. Instead, they clung to their religious high ground. The religious elites stood upon their sense of entitlement and sought to remove this man who threatened their pedestal.





As the parable continues to unfold, the king sends his slaves back out into the streets to invite everyone they find. The wedding banquet is filled. Within the banquet hall, both the good and the bad gathered there. This was great news for the poor, the hungry, and marginalized out in the streets. They would drop whatever they were doing and run to the banquet hall.

In our lives, there are people who would willingly drop everything to find the good news and the hope and peace that it brings. There are people right here in Winner who would jump at an invitation to come to the banquet, to be welcomed at the feast. When we think about the invitation that God offers, it is a radical invitation. One and all are welcome at the table. One and all can come and be in the presence of the king. Sometimes we forget that we too received that invitation once upon a time. Sometimes we too forget the great gift we have in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we forget who we were when we received the invitation to come into God's grace.



The banquet hall is filled with guests. The food is amazing. The entertainment is top notch. The decorations are breath-taking. Many sitting there must be wondering how in the world they got invited. At times we find ourselves there as well, don't we? We stand amazed in the presence, grateful that God choose a wretch like me. But more often than not, we look around and think we deserve to be there. We think we are good people, we follow the rules, we talk the talk. We deserve to be there. And then it is an easy step to begin judging who else is



and seek to share it with others, bringing them into the kingdom as well? Do we seek to extend the invitation, like the king's slaves, inviting all we find on the streets to come in and to dine at the table?

At times in our lives, we can forget that we do not deserve to be at the wedding banquet. If not by the grace of God, we would find ourselves far outside the kingdom. Instead of being thankful for our place at the table, we can begin to think that we really do deserve to be there. This too easily leads to judging the worthiness of others and to consider whether or not they deserve to be there. From this place of judgment and entitlement, we are incapable of gratitude. Once we go to this place, we find ourselves outside looking in.

But thanks be to God, the invitations keep coming. When we stumble, when we wander, over and over again God sends out the invitation. God constantly calls us to step back within His love, to come into the kingdom, to take our place at the table of mercy and grace. When the invitations come, Jesus tells us there is just one response: to run breathlessly to the banquet, dressed for the marriage of heaven and earth, wondering how in the world we ever got put on the guest list. When we respond with all we are, fully accepting the invitation that the king gives to come and live with Him forever, then our gratitude will overflow. With thankful and humble hearts, we will say, "Thanks be to God, for loving even me". Thanks be to God. Amen.

**GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

- 1) When have you found yourself feeling entitled, judging others' faith or worthiness as Christians? What moved you past this?
- 2) Who do you know that needs to accept the invitation to come into the kingdom of God? Pray for God to break through to them.
- 3) How can you offer yourself to God and others this week as a grateful response to God inviting you to the table of His grace and love?