

Pentecost 21; October 25, 2020

Matthew 22:1-14

Weddings are among the most anticipated events in everyone's lives. Although ceremonies and traditions may differ from culture to culture and age to age, almost all weddings are basically the same. It is a momentous occasion where two persons unite and become one in the eyes of men and God, a celebration of life and love, the start of a lifelong commitment. Wedding ceremonies can be simple and subtle. Statistics say that the average wedding cost in the United States today is about \$20,000 -25,000 -- some less and some a lot more.

But for some people, weddings can be lavish and grand events, especially for those who are from royalty. When Prince William made Kate Middleton his wife in 2011, it was dubbed as *"The Wedding of The Century"*. Done the regal way deserving of England's future King and Queen, the ceremony was held at the Westminster Abbey. After which, the couple paraded through the streets of London in a horse-drawn carriage. It is estimated that it only cost a mere \$34 million. Yet, there was another wedding in London that cost more than them. When Prince Charles and Princess Diana were married in 1981, it was watched on TV by an estimated 750 million people around the world. It cost only \$110 million.

Now, I'm not one to get too excited about royal weddings. But I would imagine that if I got invited to a royal wedding, and all expenses were paid, and I had not to not bring anything to the wedding and not even worry about what I had to wear, because the formal dress clothes were provided, I would probably go. I would imagine that probably every one of you here this morning would feel the same way. Why wouldn't you go? It would be one of those once in a lifetime event to experience. Wouldn't it fun to be surrounded by some of the biggest celebrities and people of stature in the world?

This morning in our text, we see one of those once in a lifetime wedding events. Jesus begins: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come."** The story begins with almost a fairy-tale feel. The king had been waiting for this day for a long time. When his son found his heart's true love, he wanted to celebrate his happiness with all those who were around him. He wanted his kingdom to celebrate with him. This was going to be an extravagant celebration. No expense was spared. Every detail would be absolutely perfect. When that invitation would come, it would be one of those events that you would make room in your schedule. You would want to circle the date on your calendar. You would want to be there. This would be a day to remember.

When that day for the wedding came, the king sent out his servants to bring the guests to the wedding of the century. If you had been invited to this wedding, there would be nothing for you to do. There would be nothing for you to bring. If you are like most people, there are some questions that pop into your mind when you open that invitation that you might get in the mail. Ever find yourself asking any of these questions? *How much do you spend on a gift? After all, you don't want to seem like you are being cheap, but you also don't want to look like you're showing off with your gift. What do you wear? How formal or informal is the wedding? Is there anything that I can bring to help out?* Then the king says to you that there is nothing for you to do. There is nothing for you to bring. Just come and enjoy my happiness today.

That's what God wants to do with us. He wants us to just simple enjoy his happiness and his gracious generosity. When Adam and Eve listened to a snake in the Garden of Eden, they no longer would share in the happiness of God. There would be nothing that they could do to fix the problem of sin. Therefore, God came up with a plan to once again restore the relationship that he wanted to have with mankind. He wants us to enjoy the marriage feast that he has prepared in heaven. Yet, there are so many who think that they can do something to get there. The Jewish leaders taught that to the people of Jesus' day. They had taught that you get to heaven by believing in God AND by following the laws of God.

The parable that we are looking at today is the last of a string of three parables. We've looked at the other two the last two weeks – the parable of the two sons and the parable of the tenants. In all three, the point is the same. There is nothing that you can do to earn God's happiness. There is nothing that you can do to fix the problem of sin. But there is someone who can – the King of today's parable.

Yet, what do the people do who are invited? **“He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.... “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.”** They said “NO.” Not only didn’t they go, they beat and killed the servants who came to bring them to the feast. Why would you turn down such an invitation from the King? I think it is easy to understand the picture that Jesus is painting for us here. There have always been people in the world who have not been interested in Jesus. There have always been people who have been hostile to Jesus. The religious leaders that Jesus was addressing in our text would kill Jesus 3 days after he spoke these words. Those who refuse the invitation of the King will be judged. Yet, the danger is there for us as well. The danger is there for us to make excuses or just simply get too busy in life to listen to the King.

Yet, there is comfort in these words of Jesus. **“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”** The King will have his banquet. His servants will go out and invite more – no matter who they are or what they have done. They will come, not because who they are or what they have done. They will be brought to the king. No matter whom you are or what you have done, you are invited to the wedding banquet of the Son.

The price has been paid for by the king. He’s even given you the wedding clothes. The wedding clothes of Jesus’ blood has covered your sins. As Paul would later remind us in his letter to the Ephesians: **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”** (Eph. 2:13) I don’t know how many wedding invitations you’ll get the rest of your life. I don’t know how simple or elaborate they might be. Maybe you will attend one of those once in a lifetime event. But there is one thing I do know. You have been invited to the wedding of the King. That celebration will be better than any event that could ever be held here on earth. That celebration will be a celebration that lasts an eternity. This is one party you won’t want to miss. Amen.