

ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)
SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2020
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (YEAR A)
READINGS: ISAIAH 25:1-9 //PSALM 23//PHILLIPIANS 4:1-9//
MATTHEW 22:1-14

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Loving Father, open our hearts and our minds to your word this morning, that we may hear with joy your message within today's parable, and that we get a real sense of your power and glory, and your great love for us, lest we deserve it, and may we accept your invitation to enter your Kingdom Amen

All of us at one time or another have received an invite to some sort of celebration. Being it a wedding //a 50//60//80 birthday party // Ordination// Graduation// Matric Ball// or a Prom and the list go on

Very important about invitations are the date and the dress code (especially for us ladies. I need a new outfit—(although they have a wardrobe full of clothes)

Our gospel reading is a parable of the guest invited to the wedding feast and this bring us to our Theme for this morning

THE INVITATION TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This morning's parable in Matthew 22 is a continuation of the three parables our Lord Jesus spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees who opposed and challenged Him in the temple. Matthew's Gospel was written to the Jewish people to prove to them that Jesus is the long-awaited King that God had promised them.

In this parable the invitation to the Kingdom of heaven is compared to an invitation of a wedding feast//banquet

I think that, of all the social and cultural events people can attend, a wedding is the happiest and most joyful. And it's an honour to be extended an invited to such an important event, because the invitation is a way of expressing that you are important to the one who invited you, and that they desire you to be a part of the happiest day of their lives.

A wedding feast is a feast of love, laughter, joy, sunshine and happiness (not even a stormy day will damper the spirit of the bride and groom or the wedding guest). It is a covenant between a man and a wife.

**A little girl at a wedding asked, "Mommy, why do brides always wear white?"
The mom replied, "Because they're happy, dear."
Halfway through the wedding the girl whispered, "Mommy, if brides wear white because they're happy, then why do men wear black?"**

In biblical times, an invitation to a wedding was something to be taken seriously. And the wedding feast in Jesus' parable was to be taken even *more* seriously by those who had been invited to it; because it was arranged for the son of a king. To be invited to such a feast was a very great honour indeed!

In the Jewish tradition there was an order of events in such a wedding invitation. First, the word went out to those that the king would have at his son's wedding; so they could plan to be ready on the great day of the feast. (That is the first invitation) And then, on the feast day—when the oxen and the cattle were slain, and all things were made ready—then the king sent his servants out to invite the guests to come. (Second invitation)

Another important aspect of the Jewish wedding feast was that the host provided a wedding garment to the guest. A special garment they had to wear for that day
(Men wore what they called a kittel—a white wrap around robe)

And so, as Jesus tells us in His parable, the exciting day finally came. And in Matt 22 v 3 we read ***“The king sent his servants out to call those who were invited to the wedding feast.***

Let us now look at the reaction of the invited guest to the invitation

In MT 22v3, ***when the servants were sent out to bring in the guests, the invited guests were unwilling to come. They refused to come.***

This group represents the Jews.

They had been invited by God to be his chosen people, yet when God's Son came into the world and presented himself as the Messiah and they were invited to follow him they refused and rejected him

The second group had all kinds of excuses they preferred instead to attend to things they thought were more important; to work on their farm, or to the money they could make from their businesses. In v 5 we read ***“But they paid no attention and went off—one to the field another to his business”***

We are sometimes so pre occupied with worldly affairs that we cannot hear the soft invitation of the voice of Christ. Our young people say that they are too young and still want to enjoy themselves so they can't respond to the invitation of entering the Kingdom of God.

We as adults are so preoccupied with our work, our careers, gaining material wealth we don't respond to God's call

My brothers and sisters but what we miss is that if we enter the Kingdom of heaven we will experience more joy and happiness

The third group respond to the invitation with hostility and violence. They actually seized the servants, mistreating them, and killing them.

We still have today Christians that are being killed for spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God

What was the reaction of the King when the invited guest refused the invitation?

- The King in this parable showed great patience and grace. An invitation by a King should never be rejected. A Royal invitation is a command and the King had all rights to punish those who rejected his invitation But even when they refused to come the King continued to extend the invitation to those who rejected and refused his invitation
This is how much God love's us and how patient he is with us even if we reject or refuse or make all kind of excuses to follow him. He is patient with us my brothers and sisters because he wants us to share in his Kingdom
- But after the second refusal however the King was angry. We read in V 7 ***the king was enraged He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burnt the city.***
(This is out of the character of the loving and forgiving God we know)

This means complete disaster had come to those who refuse to recognize the Son of God when he came, terrible things will happen to the nations, which would not accept Christ.

- However did you notice despite the unwillingness and the refusal of the invited guest not to come ---- the wedding feast had not been cancelled. It would go on as scheduled—even though those who had been invited had shown themselves unworthy of the great privilege of attending. The king graciously sent his servants out onto the highways and into the outer reaches to find as many people as they could, and invite them to come to his son's wedding feast and fill his son's banquet table.

And so they did. Jesus tells us that they gathered together all whom they found—both bad and good. There were no qualifications. Whoever they may be, wherever they were; if they were found at all, they were gathered in. And when it was over, the banquet hall was filled with happy guests—people who perhaps were beggars, or common labourers, or sinners, or even foreigners were there.

These last guest represents the sinners and the Gentiles it represents me and you who never expected an invitation into the Kingdom

My brothers and sisters this invitation is now open to all It is open to you and me. And we must decide if we are willing to accept the invitation to God's Kingdom?

And if we accept this invitation how do we dress (prepare) for the Kingdom of Heaven?

Jesus tells us that, as the king entered into the banquet hall, and observed all the guests, and his eyes fell on a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. And he said *Friend he how did you get in here without wedding clothes. The man was speechless (VII)*. The king ordered *“But to tie him hand and foot and thrown him outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*

This is a warning. We must not think that we can enter into the blessings of Jesus' kingdom reign without putting on the kingdom's garment

And what is that garment?

The wedding garment symbolises a life doing God's will.

If we accept the invitation to the Kingdom of heaven we must accept God's rule for our lives. We must surrender our will, our heart, and our lives to God, we must turn away from our sins and live a life that is pleasing to God--- and we will be of the few chosen ones and will enjoy love, laughter, joy, sunshine and happiness in the Kingdom of heaven

We read in the Philippians reading Paul tells us that *we must fill our minds with those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, honourable and praiseworthy and we must put it into practice*

CONCLUSION

In v 14 Jesus concluded *“For many are invited but a few are chosen”*
“How do you and I know for sure that we are among the chosen?”