

Matthew 22:1-14

The Kingdom: Invited and Challenged

April 17th, 2016



The first point I want to make today is that God is continually inviting us into the Kingdom into a relationship. God is speaking to us daily, hourly, moment by moment, and it is we who choose not to listen, or respond, or who do not recognize the voice of God among all the many voices that surround us day in and day out.

But the voice of God, the invitation into the Kingdom is continually being shouted out. Psalm 19:1-4 makes this point in a beautiful way. *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.”*



In our parable today we hear of 4 invitations. The first is what we today would call a “Save the date” invitation. Here’s one to a wedding I did.



In this parable we hear 3 more.

Today’s parable is an allegory. That means everything in it is a symbol of something or someone else. It is a parable that was originally told to

the Pharisees and Temple leaders, but has you and me as its primary teaching focus.

In the parable **the King is God. The Son is Jesus Christ** and the wedding banquet is the End Times feast in heaven. **The wedding banquet is the heavenly banquet that we are all invited to.** It is the wedding feast of the Bride who is the Church and the Lamb who is Jesus Christ as was read in our Revelation passage.

The King's 1st set of servants are the Old Testament Prophets who get killed and mistreated for their invitation to the Israelites to seek God.

The 2nd set of servants are the New Testament Apostles, preachers and evangelist proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and inviting people to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Those 1st invited are the Israelites who refuse the invitation to God and then in time to God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

The "Good and Bad" of verses 9 & 10 that are invited in off the streets; they are you me and all those invited down through the ages. If you didn't get all that, see the sermon notes in the bulletin.

In the 1st Century two invitations to a party were always given. The 1st invitation was a notice to get ready and be prepared for the party. It was like the "save the date" notices brides send to their friends and family today. The 2nd invitation or call was the notice to come along RIGHT NOW because all the food was ready.

2 invitations were sent because this was in the days before refrigeration; so food needed to be eaten when ready. So it was very important to come when called.

But here's the response the servants got to their master's call. In verse 3 **the first response was outright refusal to come.** So the King made a 2nd call or invitation which we see in verse 5. **The 2nd response**

then was “I am just too busy. I have a farm. I have a business and lots of other things.” They made light of the invitation and then some turned outright hostile, “They seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.”

Our tendency as human beings between our invitation and response to God is to forget, or refuse, or become overwhelmed in the demands of life. We get too busy with our lives to live out the life of faith God has given us as a gift. We become too busy to hear God’s invitation. **Though we pray “thy kingdom come, thy will be done” we don’t listen long or well enough to hear and respond.**

The response God looks for is “repentance and belief” followed by a life of “righteousness or good works.” That is the challenge we must meet to be in the Kingdom. In the parable righteousness or good works were the wedding robe everyone was wearing except one and let me explain him.

We wonder about the fairness of a King who invited everyone, both the “good and the bad” right off the street and then throws one of them out who’s not properly dressed into outer darkness. If you were suddenly invited to a formal wedding banquet would you be properly dressed?

Well to understand this we need to know something of wedding banquets in Jesus’ day. At wedding feasts in Jesus’ day if a poor person showed up without the proper dress the host would provide them garments or robes to wear.

The one who was thrown into outer darkness showed up, but didn’t even bother to avail himself of the gracious gift of a proper robe to wear. It is not enough to just show up. We must believe.

We need to ask then in this allegorical parable what does the “robe” stand for? Well **throughout the New Testament a “robe” is a**

symbol of righteousness, or righteous works, or what we would call good works.



God freely invites all: the “good and the bad”. God not only invites them in, God gives them the means to stay in if we choose to avail ourselves of the means of grace, which is service to others. Jesus’ sacrifice has invited all in, and to stay in we need to be properly dressed in the robes of service.

So many show up assuming on the mercy of God and forget about his judgment. Grace is so cheaply treated. Everyone seeks salvation and assumes it as a right or entitlement, but not the service that is evidence of saving faith.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-10, *“You have been saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not from anything you have done so no one can boast.”*

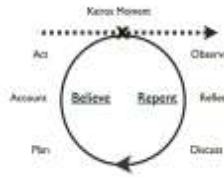
“For we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”



The invitation to the party is FREE! The robes of righteousness or good works are free. We are created in Christ Jesus to do them. And God has even prepared these good works for us to do! It is part of God’s plan for our lives. It is our part in the Kingdom here and now. We only have to step into them as we would step into new clothing.

Now the point I am making is that God is continually inviting us into the Kingdom and all the works of righteousness that is the Kingdom: doing the will of God. I know many are visual learners. So here is an image that helps us understand the process of repentance and belief. I

will come back to this image several times in this message now and in messages to come because it is a visual explanation of the process of repentance and belief.

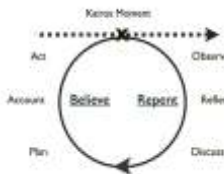


We must go back to last week's scripture and the core of Jesus' teaching. Mark 1:15, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."*

The time that is mentioned here in the Greek is **"Kairos" time**. It is the time of **the in-breaking of God**. It is the time, the perfect time, the fulfillment of time when God speaks and breaks into our lives and invites us into the Kingdom.

It is not the Greek word **"Chronos"**. That is the Greek word for time as we know: **chronological, sequential time**.

When God breaks into our lives with the Good News of the Kingdom; that is an invitation to **"repent and believe"**.



We are just going on in life walking in life from point A to point B when God breaks in at a Kairos moment. Now in that moment we can ignore the invitation of God, we can get distracted by the cares and worries and riches of the world, we can get down right hostile like some did in the parable and withdraw from God and the people of God or we can enter this **"circle of repentance" or "continual renewal"** with God.

The Greek word for **"repentance" is "Metanoia"**. It literally means to turn as in turning away from sin and turning towards God. Repent also means **a change of mind**.

God speaks, we discover we are going the wrong way in life or life has gotten either really hard or we've been tremendously blessed. God has spoken to us in the circumstances of our lives and so to repent, to respond to God and believe we enter this process.

We first observe what God has said or the circumstances our life has presented us. God speaks through circumstances. We take that experience and we observe it.

We then reflect on it. What does it mean? Is this the voice of God? What is God saying to me through this? What can I learn through this disaster that has come on me or I have brought on. Intellectually, since repentance is a change of mind we think it through. We reflect on it.

Now since Christianity is always a team sport **we discuss our** "Kairos Moment", our observations and reflections with either a single Christian or a small group and from there we go to belief.

Note clearly there are 2 parts of the circle just as there were two invitations in Jesus' preaching "repent and believe".

The "repent" side of the circle is the intellectual side.

The believe side is the active side, the side of change, the side of responding to the invitation in an active way.

Belief in the New Testament always has an active component to it. It you believe in something you act on it. Like James said, "Faith without works is dead." Belief without works is just wishful thinking. It is useless.

So the process of **believing begins with making a plan**, next is having **someone hold you accountable to that plan, and then acting on that plan**. If you go all around the circle you don't come out the other side just like you entered. **You are changed!** You are more Christ like. You are a better disciple of Jesus Christ. The exit from the circle I

believe should point up towards God because when we go through a time of repentance and belief we become more God like. Our life has changed direction and if we do this again and again we enter a lifestyle of **continual renewal or a slinky life style**.



We go around again and again and each time we are closer to God.

A small group, or huddle, or accountability group, or spiritual advisor is critical for this process to proceed. All these huge mega churches we read about; all the huge revival movements that lasted were, and are, built on small groups where this process of repentance and belief is encouraged and lived out. It also happens with spiritual advisors and counselors. Example...

In the early 90s I had a spiritual advisor/counselor here in Tucson Dr. Sorrensen. I was seeing him because I frankly was overworking myself to the point of emotional and physical exhaustion. I had been there before and he said to me as he lifted up my bad habits, "You are a human being not a human doing." Take some time off. Take care of yourself. I just did not see it for the longest time. Because can't we do all things through Christ who strengthens us?

I heard that invitation repeatedly from him and got so frustrated I told him I was going to quit. He said, "Ok, but you will be right back here sometime in the future until you get over this." I thought he had cursed me, but what I was doing was the first half of the circle. I observed, reflected and discussed, but I made no plans or asked to be held accountable and for sure I wasn't acting on the invitation of God that came through this man for the longest time, which was to rest, one of the 10 commandments.

But I finally repented and believed and that has made all the difference since.

I want to train a group of people in this type of “Continual Renewal”. This type of groups we call huddles. I have trained many people in this type of spirituality and if you would like to learn more write your name down on a piece of paper and give it to me and we will get together and I will explain more.

But this is a powerful way of growing spiritually. It was Jesus’ model for training his disciples. If you would want to be a part of such a group we will set up some meeting times and become part of each other’s lives. Just like Jesus was an intimate part of the disciple’s lives we will become deeply a part of each other’s lives.

You will learn how to better hear the invitation of God, the voice of God going out into all the earth, and how to more easily respond. Life may not be simpler or “better” but it will be lived in the will of God.

I implore you to “Repent and believe the Good News. The time is right the Kingdom of God is near you.”

In Jesus’ name...Amen.