

“Lord God, you have appointed me as pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

MATTHEW 22

¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables. He said, ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent out his servants to summon those who were invited to the wedding banquet, but they did not want to come. ⁴“Then he sent out other servants and said, ‘Tell those who are invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet!’ ⁵“But those who were invited paid no attention and went off, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized the king’s servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷As a result, the king was very angry. He sent his army and killed those murderers and burned their town. ⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹So go to the main crossroads and invite as many as you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those servants went out to the roads and gathered together everyone they found, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without wearing wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. ¹³Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”



I love to see my son feast. He sits in his high chair, often when I come home, and he smiles his chubby smile, and he calls me dad. He says, “Please!” “Eat!” “Cup!” and when he wants Pepperidge Farm goldfish crackers, he sucks in his cheeks. I’ve never been so interested in what a toddler puts in his face, either. He’s past the stage where everything he can get his hands on goes into his

mouth. But there are foods he does and doesn't like, and every once in a while I ask my wife whether he got enough vegetables, if he likes to drink milk yet, or if he had any meat with his cheese and bread.

How the Father loves to see the best feast in place for His only-begotten Son.

The Father's Filling Feast

1. A feast that fills the soul

First, what kind of feast was this? It is significant that we are not talking about a funeral. This is not a buffet for us to eat our feelings because our hearts are so heavy. Well, wouldn't you expect the only refreshments for sinners to be the cup of punishment, our just desserts? That is what we deserve. But that is not what Jesus tells us we get in this parable. This is a feast filled with joy and victory, glory, honor, and beauty. Therefore, it is a feast that fills the soul.

The original invite list didn't think so. Twice the Father of the Bridegroom invites these fools, these spiritual simpletons, to the main event, the greatest feast they could ever imagine. But they refused him and ignored him. They had no time for this feast, because they did not value their souls.

So what was on the menu? *"My oxen and my fattened calf have been butchered, and everything is ready ... the wedding banquet is ready"* (v4,8). What does that fattened calf stand for?

We may assume this is a heavenly feasting, and it most certainly is. But nothing indicates that this feast is limited to heaven.

The rest of Scripture describes this feast. Mary sang that "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." Jesus explains in His beatitudes, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Isaiah 55 calls for those who would come and eat without cost, but then he says, "Give EAR and come to me, HEAR ME that your soul may live." Jesus in John 6 talks about feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood, but this is not confined to Holy Communion. It is feeding in faith on the Word and sacraments. What else could this feast be than God's Word and sacraments? For what else feeds the soul as this feast does? Nothing else offers forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life.

Now more than ever it is easy to refuse the feast. We are BUSY. We have bodies to care for. We wrap them in masks and we wash them in sanitizer and we change our clothes more frequently to keep from the virus. But how often do we eat the meals that we need? Once a week? If you ate a meal for your body once a week, would it be enough? The Lord wishes to feed you with His Word throughout the week. He wishes to feed you and many more, with ...

2. A feast that fills the hall

We know this is how it all turned out. "*The wedding hall was filled with guests*" (v10). But how could this be? We know the original invitees did not attend.

The original invitees did not fill the hall. They were too busy at their own barbecue, for after slaughtering His servants, the Father of the Bridegroom had those murderers put to death. God's house, God's rules.

"Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you can find. So the servants went out into the street corners" (v9-10), to the highways and byways. They found all the people they could, "*both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests*" (v10).

The invitation is universal. The call goes to all. "*All have sinned and fall short, and all are justified through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*" He died for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD. WHOEVER believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. God wants ALL MEN to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. There is no Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. Such is the wedding feast that not only fills our souls but fills the hall, the many mansions prepared for us in Christ Jesus' death and resurrection.

Therefore you and I are not just the partakers of the feast. You and I are the messengers to go out to the street corners, the highways and byways, to declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His heavenly light. The best enjoyment of this feast is to SHARE it. Many are called, both "good and bad," so that the wedding hall is filled with guests. Some are so hungry for this feast that they are dull to what their soul is saying to them. You and I are called to divulge the disease of sin and share the truth of salvation.

3. A feast for His sons and daughters

As the parable progresses, Jesus tells us that the Father scans the crowd at the wedding hall. He sees a man who is out of place, because he is wearing the wrong clothes. The Father is insulted and has the man bound, hand and foot, and thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. God's house, God's rules.

What is this? Is this to suggest we must treat church as a black-tie event?

I used to think: This poor guy! He gets bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness where there's gonna be weeping and gnashing of teeth?!? All he did was wear inappropriate clothing! This is harsh! But no.

Textually speaking, he's not a "poor guy," because he's not just a "bad" guy, because both good and bad people have been invited. This man is not here to celebrate. The closest example I can come up with is wearing white to a wedding. Why is that such a *faux pax*? It is a *faux pax* because wearing white draws attention away from the bride and onto one's self. The man was stealing the focus. In biblical terms, the man wore his own righteousness. The inappropriate clothing is false discipleship—hypocrisy.

This is not to suggest we must treat church as a black-tie event. It is to suggest that we throw off the clothing that so easily hinders and put on the robes of righteousness. "*Whoever is baptized with Christ has clothed himself with Christ.*" These clothes are so thoroughly identifiable with our Savior Jesus Christ that whatever can be said of Him can be said of us.

The eye of the Father knows the difference between the visible church and the invisible Church, the universal Christian Church. How proud the Father is of His sons and daughters! He views us through the lens of Jesus alone. Those robed in His righteousness are truly viewed through the lens of His righteousness.

Now are you here for the feast? If you want to be viewed as a son or daughter, check your works at the door. There is no room here for a sinner who wishes to wear your inherent good. There is no inherent good in the sinner. Come to the feast! For the Father wishes to feed us with the Word and sacrament in the name of Jesus. Amen.