

Come to the Wedding Banquet!¹

‡ **Determined love** (vv.1-4, 8-10)

‡ **Insane rejection** (vv.5-7)

‡ **Worthy by grace** (vv.11-14)

In the Name of God's own Son, dear fellow wedding guests:

Do you ever worry about what to wear? Not us guys, right? Attending an all male college back in the day, some guys would roll out of bed in the morning and come grungy to class. But then the guy got a girlfriend, and his room wasn't such a pigsty anymore. Nicer clothes, Grandpa's Old Spice, or Brut was in.

A famous radio personality once told a story about crossing the river to watch a football game with fans from the other side. He wisely decided not to wear his purple and in the land of green and gold. During the first half he realized his meat packing rivals didn't just want to beat the bearded marauders; they wanted to kill them. During halftime he quietly slipped back across the river.

Seriously, in some places the wrong uniform can get you killed. Even in happy times your friends and family might really care about what you wear. Clothing counts when God invites, "**Come to the Wedding Banquet!** But first, you need to hear and heed God's invitation of...

‡ **Determined love** (vv.1-4, 8-10)

If you've ever had someone you really cared about, who spurned your love, you've tasted a little of the bitterness God has felt since the beginning. God created human beings to have fellowship with Him. He built them a beautiful garden paradise to walk and talk with Him during the cool the day. Adam and Eve had perfect fellowship with God. Instead they rebelled against His one command. After the LORD was so generous, they believed Satan the enemy instead. The Bible blames Adam for death and destruction coming into God's perfect world. Since then, the LORD God has been doing everything possible to reconnect with His fallen creatures. He did not wait for them. The LORD God came calling, "Adam where are you?"

You can go back and listen to the last two weeks of sermons on our newlifeshoreview website. See how earnestly Jesus is trying to win back the Jewish religious leaders who were only hours away from condemning him to death on a Roman cross. It's the last Tuesday of Jesus' life on this earth as the Son of God, and He so much wants His own Jewish people to repent and believe. But Jesus knows they won't, and so He tells another parable so totally inclusive, yet very pointed. It's like your favorite sports team wants everybody to come, but you have to come with a ticket. Wearing the right jersey will help too.

So Jesus wants us first of all to see God's **Determined love** looking forward to the wedding banquet of His Son. He sends out His servants with an invite. And surprise! They don't want to come. That wedding banquet was described in vivid detail 700 BC in today's First Reading (Isaiah 25:6-9). ***On this mountain*** means in Jerusalem and this banquet is prepared ***for all peoples***. All the peoples of the earth. Doesn't this just make you hungry? ***A banquet of rich food, banquet of aged wines, the best cuts of meat, and the finest wines.*** (Why insist God is against all alcohol?) God's banquet will undo all the damage of Adam's rebellion. ***The LORD God will wipe away the tears from every face. He will take away the shame of his people throughout the earth.*** For sure! ***The LORD has spoken.*** At last God's people will be vindicated. ***Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him.*** You notice God does everything? All his people had to do was wait, i.e., trust, and then ***be glad and rejoice in his salvation!***

¹ 2023 WELS Worship Foundations series: *TELL US A STORY: A Story of Insane Rejection.*

God makes such awesome plans. For centuries His servants the prophets kept calling them **Come to the Banquet!** Who would refuse such a generous invitation from a great king? And what kind of king with ignore the first refusals and send out more servants to keep inviting? His determination is doubling down in love. *He sent out other servants and said tell those who are invited look, I prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened and cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet!* He's still doing everything; all they need to do is accept the invitation and come. If you were in an accident that landed your car in a pond, would you refuse if someone tried to pull you out?

This wedding banquet is also a rescue mission. That's what I love about my confirmation passage, in our Second Reading (Romans 1:16-17). This is truly good news. The Gospel says Jesus God's own Son came into this world to live and die for the sins of all, then rise again to give us eternal life. The big secret God wants everyone to know is that this good news is *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*. It's like heaven being thrown open into paradise again when you trust this gift from God is for you! *"The righteous will live by faith."* It's not like the medieval church and all the worlds religions saying the arrow is pointing up as if you have to give perfect righteousness to God. Thanks to Jesus, the arrow now points down as God says, **Come to the Banquet!** Just trust, come and rejoice in God's great salvation.

† **Insane rejection** (vv.5-7)

To some it seems as if Jesus is purposely exaggerating to make a point. And yet it actually happened when God sent his Son to redeem His own people. Jesus experienced the **Insane rejection** of those who were invited but paid no attention. They were busy with other things like their farm or their business. Sounds American, doesn't it? It's been said that Americans *worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship*. But you can't go to the wedding banquet if you're just too busy with other things. Might that be why God let's us go through hard economic times? Times when fields don't produce? Or businesses fail?

Even worse as Jesus says, *The rest seized the king's servants, mistreated them, and killed them*. That's what God's own people did to His prophets over all those centuries. Shameful! In the face of such **Insane rejection**, there is a limit to His patience. Because of all this violence against His gracious call, *Come to the Wedding Banquet! the king was very angry. He sent his army and killed those murderers and burned their town*. A few decades after Jesus died and rose again, the Lord had his own capital city, and his own temple destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. The fire was so hot that the gold melted down into the stones, and the soldiers had to spend days prying it from the cracks. **Insane!**

† **Worthy by grace** (vv.11-14)

You might think that's the end of the story when God's **Determined love** meets **Insane rejection**. But *the Son of Man came to seek, and to save the lost*. God is a warrior who will beat back our enemies of sin, death, and hell. And he will do it with awesome invitations, like **Come to the Wedding Banquet!**

So the king does something else that seems so illogical to twisted human sense. The king said to his servants, *"The wedding banquet is ready, but those who are invited were not worthy."* Not only the Jews, but all people, non-Jews like us Gentiles too, all are *not worthy*. In this age of worshiping money, science, sensuality, and humanism, we're about to hear the mistake that costs most the wedding banquet of God.

The king came in to see the guests, and *there was a man not wearing wedding clothes*. There is no debate in Scripture. Isaiah 61:10 says of God, *"He has clothed me in garments of salvation."* Revelation 6:11 tells us that *a white robe was given to each of the martyrs in heaven while they wait for the full number of fellow servants and brothers to be put to death as they were*. The fact is that everyone who has been *baptized into Christ has been clothed with a Christ*. (Galatians 3:27)

You see, the king had sent his servants out to the roads coming in from the countryside, the main crossroads, and said, *"Invite as many as you find to the wedding banquet."* These people weren't worthy either, but the king wanted his son's wedding banquet filled. So he told his servants to *gather in everyone*

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they found **both good and bad**. No matter what your status in life, your level of education, whether you're plain or beautiful, God wants you not because of your merit, but only because of His mercy. He loves you because he loves you because he loves you. It's a fact: God's Son shed His blood to wash away the sins of the whole world. It's absolutely true that God raised Jesus from the dead and declared the whole world, Not guilty! Justified! All this shows us, God's love, but that's not what the world religions teach.

God's servants got it done, and **the wedding hall was filled with guests**. Since everyone was coming in from the highways and hedges, none would have clothes for a wedding. So the king supplied everyone with clothing that was suitable for drinking the finest wines and eating the finest food. See how the king does everything to have wonderful fellowship with his subjects?

But here was a man who came grungy. In spite of all the king's great love for His people, this one just rolled out of bed, expecting the king should just accept him on his own terms.

The king said, **"Friend, how did you get in here without wearing wedding clothes?"** After all that talk radio, all those podcasts, and all his virtue signaling in social media, **the man was speechless**. No matter how intelligent you are, you can't answer God unless you are clothed in the righteousness God gives through Jesus Christ our Lord. The unrepentant will suffer for all eternity - hopeless grief...raging anger. The king told his servants, **"Tie him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."** **For many are called, but few are chosen.**

From all eternity, God, out of pure grace, without any merit or worthiness in us, chose by name from sinful humanity those whom he would call to be his children. His eternal, gracious decree God carries out in time by bringing individual sinners to faith in Christ through the gospel. All humans are equally sinful and spiritually dead. Not one of us can save ourselves or even respond to God's gospel call. But in totally undeserved, unfathomable love, God gives some sinners faith to believe the gospel.² He covers them with the robes of His righteousness. They are saved. According to the dear Holy Spirit through Paul, you can tell who are God's **chosen** ones by who listens and believes God's Word that Jesus is the Savior of all.

As we use God's gospel and sacraments to strengthen and nourish our faith, we **"make [our] calling and election sure."** (2 Peter 1:10 NIV84) As the old campfire song goes, "They will know we are Christians by our love." Faith born love can't be silent. Now we are the King's servants sharing His invitation: **Come to the Wedding Banquet!**

A mission pastor once told how he used his "evangelism car" to spread God's invitation. As he worked in his driveway, men in the neighborhood would stop by to talk about cars and end up hearing the Gospel. Others like a welder and a mechanic eventually took instructions and publicly confirmed their faith and confession. **"Let your light shine,"** Jesus says, while you *are going* about your daily business. Marvel as the Savior opens hurting, hungry hearts desperately in need of His healing touch and soul-saving skill.

Where there's life there's hope. **Come to the Wedding Banquet!** For God's sake just come! Amen.

² Kuschel, H. J. (1986). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (pp. 174–175). Northwestern Pub. House.

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