

October 15, 2017

**Text:** [Matthew 22:1-14](#)

**Title:** “Many Are Invited, But Few Are Chosen!”

It says it happened in Philosophy class, where a class discussion about whether or not God exists was in progress. The professor had the following logic: “Has anyone in this class seen God?” Nobody spoke. Professor asked again, “Has anyone in this class touched God?” Again, nobody spoke. “Has anyone in this class ever heard God?” When nobody spoke for the third time, he simply stated, “Then, there is no God!

One of the students did not like the sound of this, so he asked for permission to speak. The professor granted it, and the student stood up. “Has anyone in this class seen our professor’s brain?” he asked.

God is a living God. He rules the world and will judge the world. Friends, do we understand that the gospel of the Old and New Testament always begins with God’s offer, His action on our behalf? We are not first; we do not take the initiative; we are not in the center of things. At the outset there is God, the Creator and Redeemer, who wills and accomplishes something. So we ought to focus not on what we are and do, but on what God is and does.

But, at the same time, it would be a mistake to think that our life, our well-being, and our pains are of no significance to God, as if we were but a short-lived, meaningless living thing. Rather, according to the Bible, this God, great beyond our comprehension, proves to know each one of us, calling us by our names and loving us more than we can possibly love ourselves. He is the Lord of the universe, but He is even more the God of all human beings. His eternal will is eternal providence for us and with us. His purpose is human happiness, human fulfillment. Our Lord calls it a great wedding feast in His parable.

Friends, please understand that He not only speaks to us about it, but He even invites us to join in His banquet. Friends, what do we hear when we read the Bible? “I am the light of the world.” “I am the bread of life.” “He who believes in the Son shall have eternal life.” “Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Friends, whatever God has communicated through His prophets and through His Son is contained in this promise and this invitation: Come and take! Grasp the life eternal to which you have been called.

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But, God does not give us His life by throwing it at us. Never! We must go out and meet Him, to get hold of His life, to accept His call to come. He does not coerce anyone. He does not manipulate us like objects, but He deals with us as persons. He cannot give us His love if we do not respond in love. God offers us His life, because He wishes to draw us to Himself in freedom through our faith, our obedience, and our response to His Word.

But what happens to God's invitation? The result, as pictured by the Lord Himself, is truly deplorable. Please understand that He speaks from His experience with His own people, with those who have heard the invitation. What is their reaction? They pay no attention. They make excuses. They do not refuse directly. They do not say: "We don't believe that your invitation is from God." But they say they have more important things to do than to pay heed to the call. Christianity did not behave any better. For two thousand years the invitation has been repeated, but to this day the response has been as the Lord describes.

Friends, don't you think that the Christians, too, are preoccupied with more urgent matters? Business takes up all of our time. They used to say, "Sure, pastor, what you say is very nice, but you are not a businessman. Our kinds of people have so much to do, so many problems, that there is no time left to ponder religious questions. There is no time to go to the church on Sunday. I have to work. I have friends I need to entertain." They say, "we are workers, we are farmers, we are social workers, we are employees, we are teachers, we are engineers, we are doctors, and we are housewives."

What does this mean? It means our concerns are too time-consuming to allow for reflection on the Biblical message. Above all, we have our families. We have a wife and children. We have friends. We are young. We want to live first of all, to experience and to enjoy the great adventure of this life.

Friends, are these not very familiar ways of thinking to all of us? We do not categorically say "no", but there are so many things that interfere. We are caught in the concerns and problems of our lives, in joy and in sorrow, with a light mind or a heavy heart. As soon as the invitation is heard, it is forgotten, and mind and heart and will turn to a thousand different matters.

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Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. The Lord has never said that we should not work, not live up to our jobs, not to be preoccupied with our families, not to love and be loved, not to create and to build, to think and to plan. He did say, unmistakably, "But seek first His kingdom . . . and all these things shall be yours as well." All these things need not stand in the way; they should not cause us to make any excuses instead of accepting the invitation.

Of course, Jesus does not want us to become monks and hermits. He wants us to say "yes" to His invitation and to come to Him, wherever we are, each one at the post where God has placed him. He is as close to us as is the air which surrounds us. We can have fellowship with Him in the midst of our worldly obligations. Friends, can't you hear Him saying, "Give me, my child, your heart!"? Friends, this is what He wants. And when we do so, we shall see that all the other things will be ours in a new way. In the midst of our work, our jobs, our families, our politics, we shall, as new person, discover new possibilities.

On these people who have excused themselves with such seemingly good reasons, Jesus pronounces the harsh word of judgment and we read this in Luke's gospel telling the same story: "For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet." Also, in Matthew, Jesus pronounces the king sent his troops and destroyed those people who killed his messengers/ servants and burned the city. They are excluded from eternal life. Not because they did some particularly evil thing, but because they brought forth excuses, and because they had more important matters to attend to. This is, my friend, more than anything else, what the Bible calls sin, that we have more urgent things to do than to follow God's call. Friends, please understand that with our middle-class honesty and trustworthy character, as good citizens beyond reproach, we are cut off from hope, separated, and cast out from God, because we have made excuses.

Now, I'm going to stop here because there are too many things to talk about this parable. Yes, this is the parable of which the focus is on the wedding banquet of the Son. And the imagery of a wedding banquet turns to the serious message when the man without the proper wedding clothes is not merely thrown out of the banquet, but is bound hand and foot, and cast into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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That is what I'm going to talk about next Sunday. Anyhow, the story makes it clear that there is no reason, none at all, for people to reject a gracious invitation from the king to come to the wedding feast and enjoy all good things. The only reason they reject the invitation is that they do not believe the king, or they don't care about His calling.

But friends, please understand that since this is a call from the King, from God Himself, the people are not free to take it or leave it, even if they think they can be non-committal. To reject the invitation of God to share in the Kingdom is folly, because it is to choose death, or to reject the offer of grace is to reject God's only provision for eternal life.

Now what, my friends? What would be your answer to the invitation? Can you hear Jesus is lamenting, "Many are invited, but few are chosen!"?