

Session 11

JESUS INVITES

Matthew 22:1-14

Memory Verse

“Go then to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.”

– MATTHEW 22:9, CSB



Jesus Invites


THEOLOGICAL THEME: God's gift of salvation is extended to everyone, regardless of background or status. We are saved not because of our good deeds or based on our own merits, but because of God's grace. God has extended the invitation, but we must choose to accept the invitation of salvation, or reject it.


CALL TO ACTION: Who is discipling you and who are you discipling? If you can't answer one or both of those questions, please reach out to your ministerial staff as your next step on the joyous journey of discipleship.

Have you ever made a choice you regretted later? Software developer Laszlo Hanyecz did. Bitcoin was created in early 2009, and while Bitcoin might be a very recognizable (and valuable) name today, back then, no one quite knew what to do with it (or what the future would hold).

Fast forward to 2010, Laszlo, an early Bitcoin enthusiast, traded 10,000 bitcoin to another person for a Papa John's pizza, going down in history as one of the biggest trading mistakes of all time. At the time, the Bitcoin was worth \$41, but it didn't take long for bitcoin to take off. Today, 10,000 Bitcoin is worth over \$1 billion.¹

We all make decisions that affect our future: what to eat, where to live, what to do with our time, who to marry, where to go to college, and so on. All these decisions impact the trajectory of our lives, but none are as important as the decision that impacts our eternity: receiving the gift of salvation from God. Today we are studying a parable that illustrates the seriousness of this decision.

 When was a time you made a choice you came to regret? What do you wish you had done differently? Share about this time as you are comfortable and as is appropriate.


 How can we have confidence we will never regret following Jesus faithfully?

Session Summary

The parable of the wedding banquet reveals the depth of God's grace and the seriousness of our response to His offer of salvation. Though the original guests—representing many Israelites throughout the Old Testament and many Jewish leaders during Jesus's earthly ministry—rejected the invitation to the wedding feast, God extends it to all people, offering salvation freely through Jesus's redemptive work on the cross. We are welcomed into the kingdom of God not through our own merit or goodness but only by God's grace through faith in Jesus.

1. Initial Rejection (Matthew 22:1-7)

 Who do the figures in this parable represent?

 What are ways people reject God's invitation to His eternal banquet?

The book of Matthew presents this parable in a set of three parables Jesus taught about Israel's leaders:

The first, the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32, Jesus compared Israel's leader to a son who said they would be obedient to the will of the father but ultimately were not. In contrast, the other son represented those who said they would not do their father's will, then ultimately repented and were obedient.

In the parable of the vineyard owner in Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus compared Israel's leaders to tenant farmers who rejected and killed the messengers, and then ultimately the son of the vineyard owner, to whom they should have been obedient. They wickedly rejected Jesus, the cornerstone and Son in the parable.

Today we will break down the third section, the parable of the wedding banquet, together. Jesus presented several characters in this section of the parable. Scholars understand them in this way:²

- The King – God
- The Son – Jesus
- The servants – the prophets and, later, followers of Jesus
- The invited guests – the Israelite people

A king generously gave a wedding banquet for his son. Similarly, God generously invites us, unworthy as we are, to the wedding supper of the Lamb, where all faithful believers will rejoice together over Christ's eternal victory.

Despite the king's generosity, the invited guests refused to come. They didn't even have good excuses! They simply "didn't want to come" (v. 3). But the king didn't give up on his invited guests, even after their disrespect. In his mercy and compassion, He sent out his servants again, outlining the generous provisions he had made for the people in the form of a feast ("I've prepared my dinner; my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered," v. 4). But the invited guests still didn't pay attention, going about their lives without regard for the king's invitation. Some even mistreated and killed the servants of the king!


Notice the parallels between this and the Old Testament account of the Israelite people. After King David's reign, the Israelite people began sliding down a

slippery slope of disobedience that led them into exile. Many, many times in the history of the Israelite people, God sent prophets to speak to them, but the leaders and the people did not listen to their warnings (consider examples like Jeremiah and Ezekiel). Instead, the people turned to idol worship. They did what seemed right and followed the desires of their flesh. But God didn't give up on them, continuing to send prophets to turn the people back to Himself. They didn't turn back to Him and went so far as to mistreat and kill the prophets God sent (Jeremiah 38).

Their rejection by the invited guests brought consequences, and the king burned their city. The Israelites, too, brought consequences on themselves. They were sent into exile and Jerusalem was plundered and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.³ Jerusalem would be destroyed again by the Romans in AD 70.

 **Application: How do our individual choices impact our long-term reception or rejection of God's way in Jesus?**

2. Invite Everyone (Matthew 22:8-10)


 Following the line of thinking from the previous verses, how should we interpret this section of the parable? Who do the second set of guests represent, and what does their attendance mean?

 How is this illustrated through the events of Scripture also?

After the original invited guests (described here as “not worthy” v. 8) rejected the king's grace and generosity, the king told his servants to invite everyone they could find (v. 9). The original guests' flagrant disobedience and rejection wouldn't stop the banquet. The wedding feast of the Lamb will happen, just without those among the Jews, God's chosen people, who rejected the gift of salvation that was offered to them.


This second set of guests represent all true followers of Jesus. We are sinners, unworthy to commune with God, but we are invited and offered the gift of salvation all the same. Apathy and abstaining aren't an option in this choice. You either accept the gift of salvation and follow Jesus, or you reject it and face the consequences. Backgrounds and outward appearances have no bearing here. You don't earn an invitation through good works. This group includes Jew and Gentile. Everyone is invited to this table.

As a result, the wedding banquet was “filled with guests” (v. 10). Though the good news has been rejected by many, many others will accept. As Jesus's followers, we issue invitations to this feast when we share the good news with those God has placed in our lives. More are added to the guest list every day as new people come to know Christ.

 **Application:** What does this teach us about God's heart for us and the nonbelievers He has placed in our lives?

3. Few Are Chosen (Matthew 22:11-14)

One guest was not dressed appropriately. Our salvation is not of anything we do, so how is it we are dressed for the banquet and why does this matter?

 **Reflecting on verse 14, how do our lives display that we are “chosen” according to Jesus's words?**

In that day, at a wedding celebration as lavish as this one, it was customary for the host to provide garments for guests to wear.⁴ The implication is that the king had generously taken care of all his guests and provided garments for them. This act evened the playing field so no one was exalted over the other because of perceived wealth.⁵ Thanks to God's grace, we all find ourselves on equal footing in the kingdom of God.

Even though the king had generously provided garments for this man to wear, he chose not to. He relied on his own understanding instead of trusting in the provision and wisdom of his host. Proverbs 14:12 comes to mind here: “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death.” We aren’t saved by being “good.” We need God’s grace that is only found in Christ. At the wedding supper of the Lamb, the only appropriate dress will be the covering of Jesus.

The consequences for the man who sought to join the feast based on his own qualifications and goodness were severe. He was thrown “into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (v.13) The consequences for the one who rejects God’s gift of salvation are equally severe. They will be separated from God for eternity and as a result “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. 13).

Jesus ends this parable by saying that “many are invited, but few are chosen” (v. 14). The invitation is sent far and wide. It’s for everyone. But not all will say yes. The “chosen” here are genuine believers. Those who repent of their sins and follow Jesus.⁶



Application: What does this parable teach us about the kingdom of God? Where is it convicting or challenging for you personally?

Conclusion

In this third consecutive parable about the Jewish leaders, Jesus painted a clear picture of a king (representing God) who prepared a lavish wedding banquet for his son (Jesus) and invited his chosen people—the Israelites—to attend. Despite the generosity and honor of the invitation, the guests refused to come, offering no real excuse and instead selfishly choosing their own pursuits. Some even went so far as to mistreat and kill the king’s servants (the prophets).

This rejection represents Israel's long history of turning their back on God, ignoring the wisdom and warnings given by His prophets, and following their own desires. Like the prophets who came before them, many Jewish leaders would also reject John the Baptist's message and Jesus Himself. The king's response was judgment and destruction. The Israelites were sent into exile, Jerusalem was plundered and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.⁷ Jerusalem would be destroyed again by the Romans in AD 70.

The king responded to the rejection by his original guests—those who were “not worthy”—by extending the invitation to anyone his servants could find. Nothing can derail God's redemptive plan: the wedding feast of the Lamb will take place, even if those originally chosen refuse to attend. The second wave of guests represents all people from all backgrounds, who are invited into the kingdom of God not because of any good works they did, but because of God's grace. The invitation is for everyone. It's not based on background, behavior, or status—only on the willingness to receive the gift of salvation.

Jesus closed this parable by saying that “many are invited, but few are chosen” (v. 14). The invitation to salvation is extended to all, but only those who repent and follow Jesus are counted among the chosen.

Like the servants in the parable, we are also called to share the invitation to this glorious feast. It is open to all who are willing to accept it.



What does this parable teach us about God's grace and character?



What does this parable teach us about how people will sometimes receive (or reject) the gospel message? Why should this give us steady confidence?



Who has God called you to invite to His banquet? How will you respond?

Memorize

“Go then to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.”

- Matthew 22:9, CSB

References

¹Alan Sunderman, “15 Years Ago, A Software Developer Paid...”, The Associated Press, <https://fortune.com/article/pizza-bitcoin-day-story-laszlo-hanyecz-papa-johns-pizzas-value/>.

²Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1539.

³Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Matthew: 2025 Edition,” <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/matthew/matthew.htm>

⁴Ibid.

⁵Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven, The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 231.

⁶Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1540.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Matthew: 2025 Edition,” <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/matthew/matthew.htm>