

This morning we continue in our series in the Gospel of Matthew called the true people of God. We'll be in Matt 22 (776). Let's zoom out to get a bearing for the forest before we jump back into the trees. What is Matthew about at the macro level? Matthew is about Jesus bringing the Kingdom of God. The word kingdom occurs in Matthew some 55 times! Here some of the most important ones: Matt 3:2: John the Baptist came preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt 4:17: Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt 4:23 Jesus went through Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom. Matt 6:10: we pray your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matt 6:33 seek first the Kingdom. Matt 8:11 many Gentiles will come from E and W to enter the Kingdom. Matt 9:35 Jesus again proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom. Matt 13:19 the message of Jesus is called the "word of the Kingdom." Matt 10:7: when Jesus sent out the 12 he said, "And proclaim as you go, saying 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Matt 12:28: Jesus says if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, the Kingdom of God has come upon you. Matt 13 the parables of the Kingdom: mustard seed, leaven, treasure hidden in a field. Matt 18 Jesus gives the assembled congregation the keys of the Kingdom. Matt 21:43: the kingdom is taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles. God is taking back his wayward world through his Son, King Jesus.

This new section began in Matt 21 with the triumphal entry. The rest of this book is one week (21:1-28:15). The last week. Holy week. So in 21, Jesus comes on a donkey to fulfill several OT passages, but he quotes Zech 9 to show that he is the coming King who will judge the temple. The way to Jerusalem is Jesus' royal procession. He is celebrated on his way in, but questioned once he arrives in the temple. Then he clears it out and quotes from Jer 7 and Isa 56. Jer 7 is Jeremiah's sermon outside the temple warning that if Israel doesn't repent, God will destroy the temple. Isa 56 is a vision of the future (Isaiah's future, our past) of the time when God would become King and include Gentiles as his priests. His temple would become a house of prayer for all nations. Then Jesus curses the fig tree, which is symbolic of OC Israel. They will never bear fruit again. The leaders then question Jesus' authority.

Jesus then teaches about the Kingdom with three parables in a row (21:28-22:14). These parables have a particular point and focus. This is about that final generation of OC Israel: **21:45**. These parables are about true and false Israel. They all basically all make the same point. First was Israel's indictment (21:28-32), last time was Israel's sentence (33-46), and this week is Israel's execution (22:1-14).

Main point: The King will judge Unrepentant Israel and open up the Kingdom to all who trust the King. Let's consider three points: The King's gracious invitation, the expansion of the invitation, the examination of the invitees.

I. The King's Gracious Invitation - 1-3 – Again, Jesus speaks in parable. The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A king held a feast for his son. Jesus again is implying his own divine Sonship, his own uniqueness. He is the Son. The king sends his servants to call those who were invited. Literally to "call those who had been called." They had already been invited and are now being summoned. "Its go time." The common practice in the ancient Greco-Roman world was to send an initial invitation, but the specific time was often not given. It was like our modern day save the date cards. This sort of double invitation was the norm. Hosts needed to know which animals to butcher.

So, these people were previously invited but refused to come when summoned. They had talked the talk but when go time came they did not walk the walk. "But they would not come." As Jesus will say in the next chapter, "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood and under her wings and you were not willing." They refused when called and the verb is in the imperfect tense, implying a continual rejection. They kept refusing. They go back on their word, just like in the parable of the two sons: **21:30**.

4 – He sends more servants to remind them. Everything is ready for my son's wedding feast. You said you would come. The animals are slaughtered. Come to the wedding feast! / This King is patient with his sinful people. Just like with the previous parable: **21:34-37**. This King is extremely patient, forbearing, giving chance after chance after chance. / Many of them are simply not interested:

5 – They pay no attention to the invitation. It is not that they could not come, but that they would not come. They are not interested. They are apathetic. The word means they just don't care. This has been a problem: **11:16-17**. They would neither celebrate nor mourn. J.C. Ryle says, "Open sin may kill its thousands; but indifference and neglect of the gospel kill their tens of thousands. Multitudes will find themselves in hell, not so much because they openly broke the Ten Commandments, as because they made light of the truth. Christ died for them on the cross, but they neglected him."¹

Beware of apathy. Young adults (btw - teen-agers), let me talk to you specifically for a moment. You are at such an important age. A cross-roads. But a common temptation for your age is apathy. So let me, no let Jesus, urge you, exhort you to make sure you don't grow in indifference about the things of God. Lean in. Go all in. Reject passivity and fight against apathy and pursue the Lord with zeal. Redeem your young adult years. These years are so important. You are building a foundation for the rest of your life. Redeem your days! Redeem these days. Start pursuing the Lord now. Dostoyeski said, "The second half of a man's life is made up of the habits he acquired during the first half." Wake up if you find yourself bored by the things of God. What you are doing now matters and will shape the rest of your life. Start building good habits in your life now: Word, prayer, church, evangelism, giving. All the disciplines that shape you into a man of God and woman of God. As the old proverb goes "Sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action, reap a habit, sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny." Beware of indifference to Jesus. Don't be lukewarm. To the Church in Laodicea, Jesus says, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

Let me also speak to the kids, the younger young adults. You are so blessed to be raised in a strong Christian home. How kind of God! In that sense you have been invited. But now God is inviting *you* to respond. You must personally commit to King Jesus. Having Christian parents means nothing when it comes to your standing before God. You must personally trust Jesus and commit your life to following him. If you don't personally commit to the Lord, your upbringing won't save you. Dedicated as an

¹ Ryle, 226.

infant, prayed for nightly, instructed in daily family worship, hearing the gospel again and again, won't help you a bit if you don't trust and follow Jesus yourself. Young people, make your faith your own.

In the parable, some pay no attention but others are concerned with other things **22:5**. One went to his farm and another to his business. They are idolaters, for any time we put anything above the Lord, it has become an idol, a functional savior. Occupations are fine but become dangerous to our souls when they become preoccupations and we are all prone to worship the work of our hands. They preferred their own work over the King. Spurgeon tells the story of a ship owner who was visited by a man of God who asked him, "Well, sir, what is the state of your soul?" To which the merchant said, "Soul? I have no time to take care of my soul. I have enough to do just taking care of my ships." But he was not too busy to die, which he did a week later. Don't be so busy trying to make a living that you fail to make a life.

Others were not indifferent but violent: **6**. Just like the wicked tenants, they persecute and kill the servants of God. **23:29-38**. / Friends, we just need to know that many will reject Jesus and we should be surprised when they reject us. His own people rejected him. As we seek to share what we consider to be glorious good news, people will yawn. They'll prefer their trinkets and hobbies. Was that way then, it's that way now. "The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Don't be discouraged in your evangelism. They rejected the servants of the Lord, they killed the prophets, they refused the king's invitation, they will refuse yours too, but do not grow weary in doing good. / How will the King respond?:

7 – The King brings judgment. He sends troops, destroys the murderers and burns their city. This is clearly referring to what will take place in just a generation: the destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, many liberal theologians think that Matthew wrote this after AD 70. How else could he know? Well, first it is Jesus talking not Matthew. And Jesus would predict just this **23:38-24:1-2**. We know from history that this prophecy was fulfilled to a tee. Multiple times, Jesus predicted that the generation he was speaking to would live to see it.

Are you all aware of this 1st C history? It is truly incredible. From a secular standpoint, this was just the first Roman-Jewish war. The Jews revolted against Rome starting around AD 66, initiated by the Zealots. Rome responded with force. Led by Titus, they destroyed the city of Jerusalem. One million Jews lost their lives in the war. It was the end of Judaism. No temple, no Judaism. They were forced to redefine their religion. Rabbinic Judaism came into being. But from the biblical standpoint, this is Jesus judgement on unrepentant OC Israel. This is the end of OC Israel. As he cursed the fig tree that symbolized Israel: may no fruit ever come from you again.

Their city was burned. Listen to the way Josephus describes it in his Jewish history: "On the next day the Romans drove the robbers out of the lower city, and set all on fire as far as Siloam. These soldiers were indeed glad to see the city destroyed. But they missed the plunder, because the seditious had carried off all their effects, and were retired into the upper city; for they did not yet at all repent of the mischiefs they had done, but were insolent, as if they had done well; for, as they saw the city on fire, they appeared cheerful, and put on joyful countenances, in expectation, as they said, of death to end

their miseries. Accordingly, as the people were now slain, the holy house was burnt down, and the city was on fire, there was nothing further left for the enemy to do" (Wars 6. 363-364). Rome sacked Jerusalem and burned it to the ground.

The Roman army was used by God to judge his people. God often used pagan nations to judge his people. In Isa 10, God uses Assyria to judge his people. Isa 10:5-6: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of *my* anger; the staff in their hands is *my* fury! Against a godless nation I send him and against the people of my wrath I command him to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." In Isa 44, God uses Cyrus and says Cyrus is his shepherd and will fulfill all my purpose. In Jer 25:9 he uses Babylon to route Israel and calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant. Now, the Romans are his troops.

Jesus says their city will be burned. It is now *their* city. Jerusalem is no longer God's city. It has become the harlot. The Book of Revelation will call Jerusalem a prostitute. Jerusalem has become Babylon. **Rev 17:1-6, 18:2, 8-10:, 17-18, 24, 19:6-9.** / Their city will be burned, but that is not the end of the story.

II. The King Expands His Gracious Invitation – 8-9 – Those invited were not worthy. What exactly does that mean? Back in ch. 10, Jesus sent the apostle on mission to new towns to find out who was worthy and there clearly what he means is who is receptive. The idea of being worthy is not about being a good person or worthy of salvation – none of us are that, but about those who are receptive to the message and the messengers. The worthy are those receptive of the message. The unworthy – those who reject the call – will be excluded and replaced. Here is how Luke's version puts it: "For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet" (14:24).

The King tells his servants to therefore go, hit the streets and invite as many as you can. As one commentator puts it, "Calling '*anybody you find,*' rather than, as before, calling the twice *invited* (22:3-4), indicates again 'the great transfer' that occurred when the Word of God went out to the Gentile world. When Israel rejected its Messiah a disaster occurred, to be sure, but not only a disaster; a universal mission opened up as well: Israel's Messiah became the world's Savior."² What Jesus is communicating is the marriage supper of the Son is now open to all. **21:43.** A nation consisting of any and all nations.

10 - This new nation is a motley crew. They're from the streets, from the other side of the tracks. Aren't you glad? **21:31.** In the Kingdom of Christ, the first are last and the last first. The servants gathered all they could find. This word for "gather" here: they "gathered" all whom they found is the word *συνήγαγον*, from which we get synagogue. God is forming a new people, a new synagogue, a new temple, and all nations will be at this banquet **8:11-12.** John 1:11-13: "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." All are welcome and Matthew says the wedding hall was filled with guests. God will have his people. The marriage supper of the Lamb will be full.

² FDB, 389.

III. The King Examines the Invitees 11-14 – Now, this is a parable so we need to be careful about pressing the imagery too far, but I think the garment is fruit, the fruit of a transformed life. Whatever we make of the wedding garment, the point is they were false converts. **7:21-23, 13:18-23.**

We should not judge by outward appearances. All nominal Christianity – in name only Christianity - will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Only truly born-again believers will sit at the marriage feast. And truly born-again believers will have fruitful lives. They *will* bear spiritual fruit. We are saved by grace but grace is both pardon and power. We must be transformed. We are justified by faith alone, but true faith is never alone. It will issue forth in good works, it will go public in obedience. It must. Heb 12:14: “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” We must abide. **John 15:1-6.**

Those lacking the wedding garment will be judged. This is unpopular today. We all want a God who throws a party open to all, we want an air conditioned hell, but that is not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is not inclusive but exclusive. Only those who trust Christ will be saved and true trust in Christ will lead to changed lives. False converts and unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness. No light, only darkness. A place characterized by weeping. Sadness. Despair. Suffering. The gnashing of teeth. What a terrible image. Darkness, tears, anguish. The sound of gnashing teeth turns the stomach. Judgment will be terrible, which is why this message is so urgent (13:42, 50, 24:51). Trust in Christ. Follow Christ. Life is short, eternity is long, hell is real.

Jesus says many are called but few are chosen. Here we learn that the reason many will reject the invitation is ultimately because of God’s will and purpose. Not all are chosen. Jesus said it, not me. Many are called and few are chosen. Why do some deny and some receive? **11:25-27.** If we have received the invitation and have come to the banquet, it is not because of us. It is not because we are wiser, we are smarter, we are more holy. No, we have been chosen by grace. Sweet sovereign grace.

So, how should we respond to God’s Word? Three points of application. First, come. Come to the banquet. The invitation is for you. You say, what if I am not chosen. Then you wouldn’t care, but here you are and the Lord is summoning you. You are responsible. Come to Christ. Join the wedding feast. Isa 55: ““Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.”

Second, if you have come, make sure you have come. Examine your life to make sure you have a wedding garment on. Does your life bear fruit? Would the people closest to you say that over the last three years you have become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, humble, more able to exercise self-control? 1 Cor 10:12: “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” 2 Cor 13:5: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” 2 Peter 1:10: Be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure.

Remember, the difference between Christians and non-Christians is not the presence or absence of sin. Sin is present in all of us. But for Christians, it is not president. Present, not president. Remains but doesn't rule us. We sin, but we fight it. Listen to JC Ryle: "The true Christian hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it."

Are you trusting Christ? Are you following Christ? Go all in. Trust Him all the way. Let's rid ourselves of any half-hearted Christianity. Half-hearted Christianity is no Christianity. Abandon yourself for Him. Have Christ all the way. Friends, there is nothing more important than the state of your soul. May you never rest till you can answer with satisfaction, "I am the Lord's and he is mine. I am clothed with Christ, committed to him."

Third, go to the streets and invite sinners to come. We beggars have found bread, so let's go tell people. Make a goal to share the gospel with one person this week. It'll be great. Just tell them that Jesus saves sinners. He'll do the rest. He can reach the hardest of hearts in the farthest of places. Notice verse **9**: Go therefore. It is the same way he'll end this gospel: go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Invite them in. / The King will judge those who do not repent and open up the Kingdom to all who trust the King.