



**Matthew 22:1-14**  
**An Invitation to the Royal Wedding**

Summary: God goes to extraordinary lengths to bless us, and people consistently reject and resist Him.

It's the first Sunday of the New Year and we are settling back into our regular routines. We're going to pick up the gospel of Matthew where we left off back in early December, and we will continue to go verse by verse, chapter by chapter, until we reach the end of the book probably right around Easter when we will see Matthew's description of the crucifixion and resurrection and then we'll select another book of the Bible and do the same thing all over again.

Now, it's been several weeks; so let me refresh your memory with what's going on here in Matthew. We've come to the final week of Jesus' life. He has already made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, presented Himself as the promised Messiah, the long-awaited Savior, and announced the Kingdom of Heaven. It's caught the attention of some people; there has been some excitement, especially as Jesus made what we call the Triumphal Entry. Ordinary people and people from the margins of society have flocked to Him – people that were overlooked by the masses suddenly find themselves staring into the eyes of God.

But, not everyone was happy to see Jesus. There has been some resistance because, it turns out a lot of people were happy with the status quo.

The same thing happens in every revolution, the leadership and a segment of the population are perfectly happy with their life, their routine, their rhythm; they're comfortable and they're not looking for any sort of change. And that explains why they were so willing to reject Jesus who claimed to be the Son of God and who was working some pretty amazing miracles to prove it. It explains why they could see someone doing nothing but good deeds, speaking nothing but truth, motivated by nothing but mercy and justice, and justify themselves as they resisted His claims.

And yet, even as they did that - one thing we have noticed time and time again is the astonishing patience of Jesus. And, it's something we'll see again this morning: God goes to extraordinary lengths to bless us, and people consistently reject and resist Him.

We pick things up in verse one where Jesus is speaking to the chief priests of the nation of Israel, and members of a religious denomination known as the Pharisees – neither of which has any interest in change:

**Matthew 22:1** And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:  
2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,

3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

A parable is a story used to communicate a larger idea. Notice He says, *The kingdom of heaven is like*. It's a comparison – you can understand this concept or idea, so let me use it to help you understand something else.

The king is meant to be a picture of God, who has arranged a marriage for His Son, Jesus. The people Jesus is talking to right now are the people God has already invited to the wedding.

God has been at work through the nation of Israel throughout history, they've always held a special place in His eye. So, they got what we might call, a save the date – they were made aware that this wedding was going to happen, they should have been expecting it. But when God sent His servants calling them to the wedding, they resisted. They had other things to do, *they were not willing to come*.

This is exactly what Jesus experienced when He entered Jerusalem, these leaders who should have rejoiced and led the people to accept their Savior were more concerned about how all of this could play out and what it might mean for them.

But I want pull your attention over to something very important here – the chapter opens with the words *Jesus answered and spoke to them again*.

He spoke to these people who have been consistently, repeatedly, even aggressively resisting Him. He spoke to them, *again*. He has already told them two other parables back in Chapter 21. The first was about a father who asked his sons to go and do something for him and one said "Sure! He would be happy to," but never did, and the other said, 'Sorry dad, I'm too busy,' but then felt a sense of remorse and went and did what he was asked.

The point was that it's not just saying the right things, but doing the right things that is important with God. The people Jesus was talking to were much more like the first son who put on a good face and said yes, Father, we're happy to do what you want. But they never got around to it. Meanwhile, others who seemed to live lives that were far less righteous on the outside – who didn't seem to have time for God at first, were coming under conviction and seeking to do what God commanded.

And then, Jesus told them a second story, this time about a landowner who took some of his property and tried to turn it into an investment. He planted a vineyard, dug a winepress for making wine from the grapes when it was time for harvest, and built a nice fence around everything and a watchtower to keep an eye on it all. It was move-in ready, a turnkey solution for someone looking to start up a new business. All he asked was a typical share of the profits.

So, he rented the newly developed property to a group and took off on a trip. And when it was time to receive the profits, he sent some of his staff to collect. But instead of paying up, the renters attacked them. So, the landowner sent a second group to collect his profits and the renters did the same thing again. So finally the landowner sent his son to collect the funds and the renters said, here comes the guy who will inherit all of this property we're working on, if we kill him, we'll have the place to ourselves.

So, Jesus asks the audience, what do you think the landowner will do? And they said, He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to people who will take care of it and keep up their agreement. And then Jesus told them – well, you're the renters.

In this parable, God was the landowner, the renters were the leaders of the nation of Israel, and Jesus was the one who stood to inherit everything so they wanted to kill Him.

This was the second story in a row that Jesus told trying to get these people to see things from a different angle, trying to get their attention, trying to help them see what they were doing. And in this story, the renters were given three chances to do the right thing, but they rejected each chance.

Now, Jesus is telling them a *third* story! And, once again, the story is going to have more than one chance to set things right.

My friends, do you see ridiculously kind and gracious God is to us? How He is absurdly patient with us? He comes time and time again to get our attention. He works in multiple ways over a season of time, patiently trying to help us see where we need to change, or where we need to completely abandon our current ideas, habits, relationships, or even the entire direction of our life and do a 180. He gives us a tremendous amount of turning room and surrounds us with warning lights and buzzers.

But do we hear them? And do we respond?

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about, God has been speaking to you over and over again, you're hearing the same thing from different people or on different occasions, or the same small voice keeps speaking in your ear. God keeps trying to get your attention. He knows how stubborn we are. He knows how strong the pull of sin and temptation are. He knows how hard it is to change. He knows everything, and that is why He speaks, and then speaks again, and again – He is merciful to us.

Israel's most famous king, King David, wrote songs about God. We call them Psalms. You probably know or have heard of Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd." But there are 150 of them right in the middle of your Bible, including Psalm 103, also written by King David.

Keep a finger in Matthew and turn there with me now – look at what it says about God beginning in:

**Ps 103:8** The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,  
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.  
9 He will not always strive *with us*,  
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.  
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;  
12 As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.  
13 As a father pities *his* children,  
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.  
14 For He knows our frame;  
He remembers that we *are* dust.

This is the God who stands there in the Temple, in Jerusalem, trying over and over again to get these men to see the error of their ways. Offering them chance after chance to change, proving that He is *merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy*. In fact, He's about to offer one more chance as He continues to tell the story.

4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding."

The Bible describes several weddings, so we have a good idea of what this event would have involved. Celebrations often lasted several days, and a royal wedding might last a week or more. Good food was served. Wine flowed – in fact, if you remember; Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding where they had run out. The entire event was marked by joyful hearts, or literally, "gladness of heart" (Song 3:11) on the part of the bride, the groom, and everyone in attendance. Mourning or fasting were prohibited, this was a time for rejoicing (Matt 9:15). Music and dancing played a large role including special wedding songs that were sung (Ps 45, 78:63). And, of course, gifts were given (1 Kings 9:16). A wedding, especially a royal wedding, was meant to be a big deal, the kind of thing you remembered for years to come.

But for some reason, people didn't respond to the first invitation, so the king sends another and this time he tells his servants to let people know what to expect – the food is prepared, the meat is ready, it's going to be a good time, you should really come.

Friends, this is getting ridiculous. How patient can you be?

Can you imagine if you were the one who planned a wedding and you had gone through everything that involves and your guests acted like this?

Some of you experience it on a smaller scale. You spend time in the kitchen preparing a meal, managing the chaos of preparing several things at once, and now you're close to being ready, you've put a lot of time and effort into the meal, and you're excited about it – you want people to come and enjoy it while it's hot – so you call for your spouse, or your kids, or your friends to come to table, dinner's ready – but they're all caught up in some video game, or some project, or some website, or sports game and there's no sense of urgency on their part to enjoy this thing you've just put so much time into preparing, or simply to show some appreciation and respect for your effort to make something *for them*.

Now, that's true in ordinary life with dinner on Thursday, but Jesus is talking about calling people to a royal wedding! This is going to be a big deal. They're going to serve organic, grass-fed, well-marbled beef, and lots of it – oxen and fatted cattle – both of those terms are plural – it's not just one ox, not just one cow, multiple animals have been slaughtered, you don't eat like this everyday! Everything is ready. [Come to the wedding.](#)

But even with a second invitation people weren't interested in coming.

[5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.](#)

This baffles me. It baffles me that God would so patiently invite us to such extravagance, such grace, such kindness and mercy, at no expense to us. He simply invites us to come, receive, and enjoy, and we still turn our nose, pull out our phone, and search for “better” things to do. Or, we resist forcefully:

[6 And the rest seized his servants, treated \*them\* spitefully, and killed \*them\*.](#)

Throughout history God's prophets have often been rejected by the people they were sent to reach. And the history of the church has been much of the same. Read through the book of Acts – it's a historical account of the things that happened in the years following the death and resurrection of Jesus - and you find the men and women of the early church suffering persecution, violence, arrest, and even martyrdom for simply trying to share the love of Christ with their communities.

The same things have been suffered by missionaries throughout the ages, and are still being endured by Christians around the world in many countries today. Men and women are still seized, treated spitefully, and sometimes killed as they try to invite people to a banquet hosted by our Heavenly King.

There are people who hate God. Or at the very least just aren't interested. They're busy with other things, other priorities. Even though God reaches out time and time again, they simply refuse to come. So, eventually, God's patience runs out. Rebelling against a king, even a gentle king, has consequences.

7 But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

One of the things I've said many times is, don't mistake God's patience for His permission. Don't assume that just because God hasn't punished you yet, that He never will. No one, EVER gets away with anything permanently. Sooner or later it all catches up to you, or Jesus steps in and saves you. One way or the other, everything you've ever done wrong is ultimately addressed.

But now notice this – even after He has been rejected by the people He wanted bless, God doesn't sulk in a corner or stomp off in a huff. He simply redirects His generosity. The wedding is going to happen, the celebration will occur – someone is going to enjoy all that beef – and now it's going to be people who never saw it coming:

8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.

This is the history of the Church, this is the Great Commission. God has sent His servants, to invite people from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation to come to this feast. He invites Chinese, and Arabs, Hondurans and Romanians, African-Americans, Mexican Americans, and Korean-Americans – His servants are told to invite everyone they find – good and bad – people who seem to have it all together and people who know their life is falling apart. God wants to fill the wedding hall of heaven with guests – including you.

But, He does have some expectations.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

Evidently someone showed up and looked out of place, he wasn't properly dressed.

There are two takes on this – one, that he should have put on his best clothes before coming, or done whatever he could to make himself as presentable as possible. The problem with this is, God never expects us to clean ourselves up before coming to Him. He offers to do the cleaning.

So, other people say perhaps a king would have clothes available for his guests – kind of like going to a nice restaurant and they will have a jacket a man can wear while seated if

necessary. And the thinking is that we are to put on the righteousness of Christ in order to enter Heaven. And that is most certainly a possibility - the Bible speaks in several places of us receiving robes of righteousness.

But what we can say for sure is this man was interested enough in what was going on to come check things out, but not committed enough to make a change in his life. He wanted to keep his independence, do things his way. You know what this is like – sniffing out what’s going on, who else is going to be there, what’s the plan before you commit to going to the party – well, that’s what this guy was doing. And when he was confronted, he had no answer, no explanation for his actions, so he was thrown out.

Today there are still those who hear God’s invitation and come closer, maybe come to church, but don’t want to conform, don’t want to change, don’t want to put on the wedding garment. They want religion their way - they’re skeptical of authority and organized religion. That’s all very well and good, but according to Jesus, if you’re going to accept His invitation, you also have to accept His expectations. Anyone at all can come to God, anyone at all can respond to His invitation, but it can’t be on your terms. It has to be on His.

So, what do we make of all of this? I want to suggest three things.

First, I hope that this helps you understand the kindness, patience, and mercy of God. He really is longsuffering – He really does pursue you. He really does try to get your attention over and over again.

And second, I hope this helps you understand the generosity of God when you consider what the king was inviting them too. The Bible says:

*1 Cor 2:9 “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

Third, I hope this helps you understand that God is still inviting us to a wedding. He still invites us to receive something more stunning than we could ever produce on our own, and the invitation to this gospel is more inclusive than anything you’ve ever encountered. It is a wide, full, broad and unlimited invitation to sinners and saints of all sorts. God Himself has made everything ready and now you and I are invited to come.

JC Ryle noted, “The Father is ready to love and receive. The Son is ready to pardon and cleanse guilt away. The Spirit is ready to sanctify and renew. Angels are ready to rejoice over the returning sinner.”<sup>1</sup> On top of that, Grace is ready to help you. The Bible is ready to instruct you. Heaven is ready to be your everlasting home. The only thing that needs to happen is for you to accept the invitation and it’s terms - put on the wedding garments.

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<sup>1</sup> JC Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Matthew*, 281.



**Gal 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

It costs a lot of money to have a wedding today. The average cost last year in America was a little over \$33k but that's affected by the cost of where you live. The average wedding in our region was just shy of \$40k last year.<sup>2</sup> That's after an engagement ring that runs somewhere between \$6-9000 in our region last year.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, last year's royal wedding in England ran estimated \$43M.

This morning we are going to celebrate communion – an act of remembrance where we recall what God has done for us. We remember that the invitation to this wedding is written in the blood of Christ, it costs us nothing, but it costs Him everything and yet, He joyfully, patiently, endured it all for the sake of bringing us in.

In just a moment, you're going to receive a reminder of that invitation – a cup that reminds us of the blood that was shed, and a wafer that reminds of us the body that was broken. They are your invitation to the celebration God has planned. They're only going to come by once this morning though. The men are not going to bring them to you a second time, and they're not going to chase you down in the parking lot or on your way out. So let me compel you now – receive the grace that God freely extends to you – receive His invitation and conform yourself to His expectations.

Make yourself available to God – He's inviting you to a feast, to a banquet, to a celebration. Worshipping and serving God is not about a huge list of all the things you can't do and all the things you have to accept – it should be seen as invitation to a party larger than any you could throw on your own, adoption into a family that is better than your own, forgiveness of everything you've done, and joy, peace, and purpose greater than any you've ever known.

Let's pray.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/average-wedding-cost-in-america-most-expensive-2018-3#17-california-san-franciscogreater-bay-area-39329-9> Accessed 4 Jan 2018.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/engagement-ring-average-cost-by-state-2018-2#40-nebraska-5818-12>