

## Stories of Grace and Truth

Matthew 22.1-14

April 14, 2024

It's funny that last week I wrote that we're going to look at some of Jesus' parables that are future focused. Then I took a closer look at our parable for this week. I certainly hope that you're also excited to take a close look at this week's parable because this one deserves close examination if we hope to really hear what Jesus has for us.

Pastor Eric

Opening Up:

*What's the most lavish banquet you've ever been to?*

Spend some time pondering what might happen if we invested our Bible time studying only one part of Jesus' teachings. What could result if we ignored what we weren't comfortable with? What are the advantages of spending time trying to unpack those things in Jesus' teaching that are difficult to understand?

Begin by reading through Matthew 22.1-14. Who is Jesus addressing here? Look at the previous chapter for the answer. What do you know about the people Jesus is addressing? You may want to peruse the seven woes Jesus pronounces against these people beginning in Matthew 23.13.

This parable "is enough to make any interpreter go weak in the knees; I consider it among the most difficult parables of all."

Klyne Snodgrass

*Stories of Intent*

What aspects of the story bother you? It's a good idea to be honest about it and even write them out. That said, we also need to be comfortable with the reality that some of our concerns may never been satisfactorily answered! Pay attention, and perhaps jot down, the way the story flows, giving attention to any details that seem particularly significant to you. After the specially invited guests steadfastly refuse to show up, the king invites "anyone" (verse 9). How does he go on to identify them? What do you make of the figure in verse 11 who shows up not wearing the right clothing? Who are the invited in verse 14, and who are the chosen?

Jesus is quite specific in stating (verse 1) that this parable is about the kingdom of heaven as it's been at work on earth. This is the way things have been with God's kingly reign throughout history. Since this is first spoken to Jewish religious officials, who is Jesus saying were the first invited guests into his kingdom? Generally, how did they respond to the invitation? Note 2 Chronicles 24.19 and Jeremiah 25.4. See also Jesus' lament in Matthew 23.37. Then who constitutes the second group that the king invites?

It's really the coming of Jesus that results in the invitation going out to "anyone." Paul hints at this in Colossians 3.11 (see also Galatians 3.28). What does it really mean to be invited into the kingdom of heaven (through Jesus)? Have you accepted the invitation? When did you accept it?

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this parable is the guy who accepts the invitation but doesn't wear the right clothing. He doesn't fit in the banquet, so he doesn't fit in the kingdom. What does it mean to fit in the kingdom? The implication is that one who accepts the invitation must change to conform to God's kingly reign. What might that look like? How have you altered yourself (or been altered) to fit into God's kingdom? Does this change the way you think about the invitation to enter God's kingdom?

What should you do with what you learned?