

Isaiah 25:1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

Philippians 4:1-9

“Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near.” AMEN!

One’s got to know their limits!

So, I’m going to speak these lines
instead of sing them.

“It’s a nice day to start again, come on,
It’s a nice day for a white wedding!”

When it comes to singing Billy Idol
I know it is not in me! :-)

Today, we hear a story about a king
that prepares a wedding celebration
for the son.

The parable that Jesus told
this time doesn’t have
vineyards or landowners.

This is the third one in a row of parables
directed toward the temple authorities and
it is a doozy!

The parable of the Wedding Banquet
delivers to listeners images of a king

that makes it quite difficult to clearly say
that God is the “king” in the story.

We love to assign parts to the characters of
the parable, but it is not always clear.

And then there’s the part about the guy
not wearing the right clothes
to the wedding banquet.

As if we don’t already worry about
what to wear to weddings!

Don’t compete with the bride! Ahhh!

What are we supposed to do
with the one who is not wearing the right clothes?

Is Jesus talking about dress codes at church? :-)

It all reminds me of a story about
the Lutheran pastor who worked the shift at
the food pantry in the church.

A woman and her child were frequent visitors
to get food and each time the pastor invited
her, and her child, to come to worship.

“It’s not a requirement for the food you need,

but come and be a part of
this worship community.

Each week, he would ask and each Sunday
the guests never arrived.

Finally, at their next visit to the pantry
she admitted to why they never come.

“Pastor, we don’t have clothes nice enough
to come to church.”

Well, the pastor would not let something like
that deter a person from coming to church
so he went out and bought new
clothes for them.

The clothes were graciously received and
the next Sunday came and went without
the woman and child at worship.

When the pastor saw her the next
time at the pantry, he asked if the clothes
were alright?

The woman replied, “Oh yes!
The clothes were so nice we went
to the Presbyterian Church!” (Pause)

“C’mon, it’s a nice day to start again.” :-)

Pastor Joy J. Moore spoke about her
grandmother’s desire to come
to church in her “best.”

In her grandmother’s case, it was that she’d
always wear her dentures to church.

“She’d never wear them any other time!
But, when it came time for church,
my Lord, she always wore her dentures.” :-)

When I put these three parables together,
as Matthew intended,

I find it becomes a bit clearer what Jesus was
trying to communicate and notice that what

God wants us to hear is sometimes not
what is heard from the pulpit.

This parable, often taken out of the context,
is not about God starting a plan “b”
because plan “a” failed.

This is not a message about a decision
God made to make the Gentiles
the “new” people of God and

the Jewish no longer the people of God.

It's not about that either.

This parable, taken in its context and read carefully,
is communicating that “the kingdom of heaven
may be compared to a king who
gave a wedding banquet.”

“Compare” does not mean exactly the same.

Compare means “similar to” or “like.”

This king is “like” God who
prepared a generous feast
and called people to come to it.

A God who pulled out all the stops
to celebrate the wedding of his son.

We need not identify specifics,
we only need to let the teaching story
surprise us.

And it should be surprising for us
to learn that people refuse
the invitation to the banquet.

Anyone that has any knowledge

about kings and queens and
royal invitations knows that if you,
yourself, is a king or queen then you can decline,
but if you are not a king or queen then
you better go to the banquet!

It could be a matter of life or death!

The listener should be quite surprised
that invitees declined, and not only that!

The story tells us the “made light of it.”

They didn’t consider it fully and
made excuses to not attend.

Even worse than that, some of
the invitees seized, mistreated, and killed
the slaves who delivered the invitations.

Then, Jesus said, “The king was enraged.”

That is not surprising, is it? You don’t need to be a king
or queen to recognize the injustice there. (Pause)

Perhaps you are like me, and there are
people that you know, or people you read
about in the news who deserve a

bit of righteous judgment from an
enraged king.

Not just the people who have ignored the joys of life or
have made light of the invitation to the banquet
by making silly excuses to not attend,

But those who have blatantly kidnapped,
abused, and killed others.

It feels good to know there's a righteous king
who will be enraged at
the injustice of mistreatment or murder.

Yeah, I get it.

Unfortunately, the parable does not stop there.

So if we are picturing ourselves in
the audience of Jesus (that's ok), and
counting ourselves
as one of his disciples, (which is good)

then you and I are feeling pretty good
about the way things are going.

Yeah, Jesus!

Sock it to the temple authorities, sock it

to the pastors and priests! :-)

Justifiably so! :-)

Feeling good to be in the crowd listening to Jesus,
but the parable doesn't stop there.

For now everyone has been invited
to the wedding feast and the king is going
around and meeting the attendees.

“Pleased to meet you,
thank you for attending,
having a good time?” :-)

Until, “Friend, how did you get in here
without a wedding robe?”

Now remember, the king and God
are not exactly the same.

“The kingdom of heaven can be
compared to this king,” Jesus said.

“Friend, how did you get in here
without a wedding robe?”

The word “friend” is meant to be sarcastic.

For this individual was no friend.

We are not told exactly who he was
but we know he didn't do something.

And I really doubt that it was just about
a guy that didn't wear a wedding robe!

This turn of events surprises us;
it does what parables are supposed to do.

And we are called to think about
what Jesus is communicating here?

And the key to the interpretation of this parable
rests in the very last sentence.

Ironically, it is the sentence we mostly skim over.

The last verse is: For many are called,
but few are chosen.

“Start again.” (Pause)

Parable 1: The one son who changed
his mind to go work in the field.

Be like him.

Parable 2: The one who produces
the fruits of the kingdom.

Be like her.

Parable 3: The one who answers the invitation
to the banquet with a “yes,” must
follow through with the call in responsibility.

Be like them. (Pause)

We are familiar with being called.

The church and pastors say
we are called to this or that, but
when it comes to the matter of
being chosen then we are reminded

That the calling is not the end.

Jesus was (and is) communicating
the responsibility of those
who are called to follow.

And that responsibility is to reorient our lives.

To walk in God’s way.

If you’re Christian then to follow Jesus, actively.

Embody his teachings in our behavior.

We all need to “put on” Jesus and start again.

C'mon, it's a nice day to start again!

AMEN!