**Negligence Is A Waste**

**Matthew 22:1-14**

Trinity XX – 10.25.2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste?” It is true, a brain is a terrible thing to waste. Everybody has a brain, but some people ruin it with drugs or the misuse of alcohol. Others waste their brain by not using it to the fullest capacity. Others waste it by being lazy, never bothering to use it.

Negligence is the wasting of something that we are to put into use. Negligence is a common failing, and it plagues us all at some point in our life. Negligence may cause an accident, and even accidents from negligence can much pain – sometimes even death. Sometimes the negligence of others causes us frustration, and it may cause inconvenience for everybody. We are all guilty of causing pain, frustration, and inconvenience because of our negligence.

Yet the negligence in physical, social, and material matters – no matter how painful, frustrating, or inconvenient it may be – is not as threatening as spiritual negligence. It is spiritual negligence which our Lord addresses this parable in our text.

In the text, the King sent out invitations, it was the king’s special call to fellowship. The king spared nothing in expenses, in effort, and in invitation. He went to great lengths to send out his servants to make sure that those who were invited would attend. He even repeats the invitation, sending out his servants a second time to those who already once neglected and rejected the invitation.

Despite the extraordinary effort expended, the invitation is still rejected. Even more, some who rejected the invitation went so far that they “seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.” Yes, some murdered the servants which the king had sent out.

Remember thought, Jesus begins this parable by saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to…” This parable is nothing more than a recounting of God’s invitation to Israel, and their history since coming out of Egypt, told in the form of a parable. God had extended His invitation of grace and promise to Israel, His chosen people. They chased away and even murdered the prophets which God had sent to them.

This parable by Jesus is a vivid picture of Israel’s rejection of God’s grace. He is illustrating the mistreatment of His prophets. This parable is also a prophecy foretelling the fall of Jerusalem, as God’s response to their rejection. It is also a prophetic foretelling of their eternal suffering for their rejection of God’s grace.

Does this parable apply to us today? Yes, it most definitely may! Jesus makes clear that God’s call is a serious matter. Do we neglect it? Are we as negligent as were the Jews? Do we waste God’s gracious invitation to be at the weekly banquet of His grace?

Who exactly is invited? The king’s invitation was vast. The invitation to the wedding banquet was extended to any and all. All sorts of people were invited, from all walks of society – even those who were not on the “A” list – even those who society labels as “sinners.” Ultimately, the hall was filled.

God’s Gospel invitation is extended to any, and all. Jesus shows that no one is beyond His gracious call – it i is a gracious invitation to those in all walks of life, from the outwardly good and to the obvious sinners, those who everybody knows is “bad.” In this parable, Jesus prophecies that the Gospel ministry will succeed in bringing in the full number – the banquet hall will be filled – on the last day, heaven will be filled.

Yes, there was still room – but it was filled! Today, there is still room – but it is filled! Those whom the Holy Spirit moved to be here, are here. Here are gathered those whom we can see, and also angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven.

Out of His divine love and His tender mercy, God has invited us into the fellowship of His kingdom. You have heard the invitation. What will you do with it? Is it something you heed? Or is it something you neglect? The Table is set! The banquet is ready! It is here every week, a feast of epic proportions – the very body and blood of Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Do you neglect it? In the text, some went to their farms, others to their businesses, and some seized the servants, treating them badly and even killing some. They did these things rather than attend the banquet. They neglected God’s invitation.

What is the excuse to neglect God’s invitation to come to His banquet? Comfortable pillow? NASCAR? Packer football? Golf? Fishing? Too busy? Today’s the only day to clean the house? Feeling you only need the banquet feast once a month? Is the COVID’s danger the real reason – if so, that is understandable! Or, has COVID just become the excuse? Being a valid reason, one could ask the pastor to visit and bring the feast to the home. God has invited us into the fellowship of His kingdom out of His tender mercy, what do you do with the invitation. Today you have heeded it.

There was also a man in our text who came to the banquet, but even then, rejected the king’s tender mercy. In that day, wedding garments were supplied by the king for all the guests. Not everybody had the financial wherewithal to purchase clothing fit for a royal wedding, so He provided clothing for all, clothing fit for a banquet in the king’s palace. Yet this one man chose to refuse this gracious gift and came dressed in his own clothes. Because of his negligence, in other words, his rejection of the king’s gift, he was cast out of the banquet.

My friends, this portion of the parable has an important lesson. God provides for us a garment by which we are to be robed for the wedding banquet, the garment we are to wear which allows us to enter into His kingdom. It is an incredibly marvelous garment. The fabric is of the true and purist white. It is a marvelous robe, one of surpassing beauty, yet it is identical to the robe of every other guest – none stick out a adorned as more radiantly than any other.

This wedding garment is the robe of righteousness purchased and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. It is the robe of Christ’s righteousness, which righteousness was sacrificed unto death upon the cross. His righteousness is the garment given to us which covers our sinful state. It covers the sin stained garments which we have woven with our sinfulness, and which would be a disgrace to the holiness and glory God, if worn such garments were worn in presence of the King.

This garment is God’s gift to you. It is your righteousness, as a gift of God’s grace to you by faith, faith which He gives to you and sustains within you by His Holy Spirit. To claim faith as your own work, is to reject the wedding garment God has given you and try to get into the banquet wearing your own cloths. This is the sin of neglecting God’s gift.

In the miracle of baptism, God united you to Christ’s death and to His resurrection. Faith was given as a gift of God’s grace. You were robed in Christ’s righteousness, the holy, wedding garment. You did not choose to be baptized! You did not decide that you wanted to come to the banquet feast of the Lamb. You did not ask for a wedding garment so you could attend the wedding. God chose you on that day, through water and the Word, to be His own dear child and clothed you with Christ’s own righteousness. In Christ’s righteousness, in the wedding garment cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, you stand holy and righteous before God today.

Dearly beloved of God, do not be negligent, but take time to perceive the nature of your standing in God’s Church. Why are you here? What is your place in God’s kingdom? Is it yours because of your membership vow? Are you a part of Christ’s Church because of your contributions? Are you sustained in God’s kingdom because of your works of service?

No! No! No! None of these things gives you a place in God’s Kingdom. None of these earns you a place in God’s kingdom. Does that mean you can neglect them? No! They are your response to God’s gracious gift.

Your presence in God’s kingdom, your standing in Christ’s Church, your place at the banquet are yours as a gracious gift of God’s grace.

In your baptism you were given God’s gift of a wedding garment. You were robed with Christ’s righteousness – purchased and sealed with His sacrificial death and His glorious resurrection. This garment of holiness is your robe of Christ’s righteousness, given to you and to be worn by you through faith.

When you gather together for the feast of the Lamb, to hear the Word and eat of Christ’s body and drink of His blood, God’s Spirit is at work in you. These are the precious means through which Christ is at work, the means by which He has given faith to you and sustains you in your faith which proudly and gladly wears the wedding garment.

Negligence of these gracious gifts of God would be a waste. Negligence of these gracious gifts would be a waste with eternally damning consequences. Let us not fall into the temptation which brought down the nation of Israel and the outcast in our parable.

Dear friends, the beloved of God, you have been given a great salvation – do not neglect it. Instead live in it, to the praise and honor of our glorious God and King. In the name of Jesus. Amen.