

INTRO:

Alright friends, come on back... **(START RECORDING)**... In seminary, I read a quote by a commentator that's stuck with me now for over 15yrs. Anyone have that kind of thing? Quote, book, maybe music lyrics that at some point just got burned into your heart/your mind?... Abby has this like, lockbox of a brain that can recall ANY/and I mean ANY music lyric. Seriously, if A-Beautiful-Mind had a baby with Name-That-Tune, it'd be Abby... I can't do that, BUT I do recall this quote by Walter Marshall, who said this/*listen*: *"You cannot love God if you're under the continual, secret suspicion that He's really your enemy!... You simply cannot love God UNLESS you know and understand how much he loves you."*¹ And I think the reason that quote stuck with me all these years is cuz it highlights something that I think ALL of us wrestle with, which is: **How we relate to God** - approach Him/feel around Him/about Him, just how we think of ourselves BEFORE Him!... In today's parable, you're gonna see Jesus describe what it looks like to truly relate to God! BUT it's NOT the way you think... SO... follow along as we hear Jesus's Parable of: **The Wedding Feast:** **(PAUSE RECORDING)** **Jennie** reads...

TEXT:²

Hey, can we thank BOTH **Jennie** AND God for the reading of His Word?... **(START RECORDING)**... Uh, interesting parable/little more "Game of Thrones" than some of the others we've looked, BUT familiar, at least for those of you who were here two weeks ago when Pastor Clint guest-taught us **Jesus' Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14**. And I say "familiar," because, as you see, Jesus is AGAIN-here giving a party-parable. HOWEVER given the different details He includes in THIS one, commentators/I think rightly, believe He's giving a DIFFERENT parable than in **Luke 14**; the most notable difference being that while the host in Luke 14 was "a certain man" throwing a "great" but generic "banquet;" the host HERE is a King/representing God, throwing a royal wedding for his bridegroom-Son - with "bridegroom" being a COMMON NT description for Jesus.³ So similar to **Luke 14**, but in the end a different parable, which is WHY we're looking at it!

So Jesus says, *"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son."* Now notice, being in **Matthew 22** here, we're only 5 chapters from Jesus going to the Cross. FINAL week of Jesus' life on earth and what's He doing? He's telling party-parables! **Like, if you knew you had one week to live, what would you be passing on to those around you?**... JESUS is passing on stories about God wanting to party! AND not for first time by the way! As Russ Johnson says, *"at this point in Jesus' ministry, you have enough references to God and His people partying to justify the fact that when people hear 'church,' they should think... party!"* AND... legit party, cuz, **look at v.4**: King says to his servants, *"Go tell those who're invited, 'I've prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and EVERYTHING'S ready. Come...'"* And if you look down in **vv.10, 11**, you see these guests are to

¹ Walter Marshall - "The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification: Growing in Holiness by Living in Union with Christ"

² A large portion of this message adapted from various thoughts and insights provided by "22. Accept Your Acceptance (Parables #19)" - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/larkcast/id1339351918?i=1000536854262> + "Salvation; Merit or Mercy? - Christ the Controversialist—Confrontations with Jesus—December 7, 1997 - Matthew 22:1–14 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

³ See Matthew 9:15; 25:1; John 3:29; Eph. 5:25-32; Rev 21:2-9 - Matthew 22:2–3 (EBC Mt-Lk)

come to a “*wedding hall*” IN wedding attire. So we’re talking extravagant! Beautiful location, ladies in couture, dudes with clutches, paparazzi, all of it. Think Prince Harry/Megan Markle/royal wedding! **Now, let me ask you: As a guest what do you bring to a royal wedding? Anyone?**... You bring Nothing! I mean sure, for your college roommate’s wedding you might bring a West Elm spoon-set as a gift, but that’s cuz...they’re your roommate. They’re NOT a King! You don’t bring things to a King’s wedding because Kings and sons of Kings...don’t have registry’s/THEY have everything. Which is WHY this King makes a point to say everything’s ready. It’s all prepared. There’s no cover charge and this ain’t no potluck where you bring a side of mac n cheese to contribute. Nope! It’s all finished!

So, we’re told that the invitations go out, BUT shockingly, the first set of invitees, they not only, won’t come/even after, according to **v.4**, being invited twice, BUT it says, “*they paid no attention to the servants*” and EVEN “*seized and killed em.*” Now, real quick, look in **v.3** at WHO these invitees are: They’re folks who’ve already been invited **right?** A-listers or given Jesus’ context, religious insiders/Pharisees. **So what’s happening?** The King’s already invited these folks, BUT because, in Jesus’ time, it took weeks to prepare parties like this and days for people to travel TO parties like this, these A-listers/these religious insiders are folks who’ve ALREADY been invited/already said, “*Yes*” and made their reservations. They just need to get word that everything’s ready at which point they’ll come to the party! But they DON’T! And we’ll get into why in a second, but not only do they not come, they way in which they REFUSE to come, obviously it says, “*angered*” the King, to the point that he sends in his military to destroy their city...Now before you start thinking, “*uh what?*” understand: If you attacked servants of a King like this/a King’s royal ambassadors, that was an act of war. This is Benghazi! Which MEANS this King is responding EXACTLY how he should respond!

But keep going. Cuz what’s great is: even WITH war on his hands, this King won’t be deterred from having people enjoy his party. He is DEAD serious about partying. SO, it says, he sends his servants to invite another crop of people, but this time, sends em out “*to the main roads*” where they find both “*good and bad people.*” So clearly, we’ve moved off the A-list crowd. Cuz in ancient cities like this, you’d have these “*main roads*” that came into the city, that when they came together, would form these squares. And at these squares you’d find people of every ethnicity and walk of life. So this King’s saying to his servants, “*THAT’S where I want you to go and invite people!*” Which oughta tell ya: Getting on this King’s guest list is NOT about performance, pedigree, or persona! I mean really you could say: The only requirement is/**get this**: just being found and then receiving the invitation/just accepting the invitation and then showing up. Or to say it another way: **accepting your acceptance!** Really, since “*good and bad people*” are invited, the only thing we’re being told here that will keep you out is if, like that first crowd, YOU exclude yourself by just not showing-up OR like the 3rd and final character you see in this parable...you show up on your own terms! Cuz that’s what this guy does. Notice, when he shows up, the king says to him, “*Friend, how’d you get in here without a wedding garment?*” In other words, “*why are you wearing board shorts and a wrinkly v-neck rather than the required attire?*”...And Tim Keller points this out, but there’s basically only two reasons you’d do what this guy’s doing here: **One**, you didn’t have time to get fitted-for and pick-UP the required attire,

or **Two**, you didn't have the means for GETTING the required attire... Only problem with those two reasons, at least for this guys, is **/think about it**: If he was a part of the original crowd then obviously he woulda had time to get the right clothes. Cuz remember, they'd already said "yes" and were just waiting to be told when the party was gonna start... AND if he's a part of the second crowd that're invited off the streets, then money isn't an issue, since the obvious implication is that because the King invites em right off the streets, HE'S providing the wedding attire at His expense. **Ya see?**... Incidentally, that's WHY, when the King questions this guy, it says, "*he was speechless!*" Cuz he KNOWS, he has no good reason for not being in the approved attire OTHER THAN he just didn't want to! STUPIDLY thought he could approach this royal King on his own terms... And so it says, "*the king had him bound and cast into the outer darkness,*" which is an allusion to Hell, for those who refuse to come to God on His terms and through faith in Christ. And it's THERE Jesus says, "*where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" **You know what "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is?** It's overwhelming sorrow and frustration, from passing up the deal of a lifetime! AHHH! Like knowing you had the chance to buy early on BitCoin, but instead used the money to... get a haircut. Ahhh!

APPLICATION:

THAT, Jesus says, is what the Kingdom of Heaven/RELATING to the rule and reign of God, is like! **SO what do we learn ABOUT how we're to relate to God? 2 things: First, How NOT To Relate To Him.** Cuz you see 2/3 of the party guests in this parable end up excluded, because quite simply, they don't relate correctly to the King, which just shows: that in our fallen state, relating to God doesn't come naturally to us. What comes naturally is, what we might call the **fundamental** and **liberal** approaches of the first and third guests respectively. Cuz the first guests, they're your religious insiders right/the ones who have the credentials and look the part. They're your fundamentalists! But they don't come. **Why?** Cuz there's no heart for the King or His party! I mean if they weren't being overtly hostile when told that it was time to join the party, they were, as it says, rudely ignore the servants and going back to their business - literally didn't care/didn't think that what was being offered was as good as what they had, and so in their unbelief they exclude themselves... And see, a lot of us are like that. On the outside, we look good, we're doing the religious stuff/been baptized/in a Missional Family/giving financially/ALL the fundamentals! But on the inside, there's no heart/no joy...no feasting on grace! EITHER/like the violent guests, you just don't want God telling you what to do and how to live OR like the rude ones, you just don't believe that what He graciously has to offer you is better than what you already have/either way, there's no real heart for the King or His party. And so you keep up appearances, cuz as I told you last week, religion can be a very effective way of avoiding God's authority in your life, since it's essentially a scheme for paying Him off by going through the spiritual motions. You see? This kind of **conservative-fundamentalism**, it doesn't help you relate to God of grace. It only leaves you ultimately excluded in your unbelief.

But nor does the **progressive-liberalism** we'll call it, of the third character help either. Cuz that's what he is **right?** Shows up in board shorts and flip-flops/he's your classic modernist, who's been told by everybody from his mommy to his therapist that he's special, unique, just a little "skittle"/a snowflake, who's gonna accomplish so many great things, if he just believes in

himself and doesn't let anyone steal his sparkle...And so he thinks, *"I'm fine the way I am. I can show up however I want."* **Cuz why wouldn't you think that?** If you're God's gift to the world, GOD oughta play by your rules...And yet, what he finds of course, is that, though, this King is gracious, He's also Holy. He can't approach this King/You and I can't approach God on our own terms. No! What makes us acceptable before God, is not US in and of ourselves, but what He's has already provided FOR us in Christ - the "garments of righteousness" - He's purchased at His own expense, SO THAT we can be IN His holy presence!...**You see?** Because this King/because God is both gracious AND holy, neither **fundamentalism** with it's repudiation of **grace**, nor **progressivism** with it's repudiation of **holiness** will ultimately do anything but leave you excluded FROM God and His party!

So **Finally** then, we learn **How TO Relate To God**: And you see it in the guests who were invited off the streets. **Cuz what do they do?**/look in **v.10**...Nothing right? They don't bring anything, cuz again, they understand this is a gracious King who's provided EVERYTHING/the party, garments, all of it...**BUT** they also don't take that as a license to come on their own terms, since after all this is a ROYAL/Holy King too! No, what they do is/**listen: accept their acceptance**. TRUST, not only that the party's gonna be fire, but that for them to ENJOY the party, they gotta come in the way the King desires - namely in the wedding garments He's bought em!...**Friend**, that's the Kingdom! THAT'S the Gospel: It's God's announcement that because He's the King of all Kings, He's throwing the party of all parties. - A party so replete with: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control*, that in-and-of yourself you and I would NEVER be able to attend. It's too exclusive/too...Holy! YET, because God longs to have you AT the party, He spared no expense/not even the life of His Son, who died on the cross for your sins, to get you TO party/get you clothed in His righteousness! In other words, God's not only throwing an incredible party, He's extended to YOU and those around you, an invitation, WHILE ALSO/**get this**: already paid both you're cover charge and bar-tab! So NOW, all you have to do to get in/all ANYONE has to do to get in...is **accept your acceptance!** The only thing that ever keeps us from enjoy God and what He has for us is our unbelief! Cuz FAITH, you understand, is simply taking God at His word that in Christ you're accepted and invited. RATHER THAN trying to earn that acceptance through religious performance OR assuming you have it in-and-of-yourself...Now, that's not to say that because God accepts you, He therefore approves of everything you wanna do. No! God accepting you doesn't have anything to do with you going and doing things that are foolish, sinful and harmful. Those things'll always be foolish, sinful and harmful. But it IS to say that since Jesus has lived, died, and risen from the dead to deal with all foolishness, sin and harm; BOTH "*good and bad*" people, as this parable says, can now be included. There's NOTHING now holding God back from saying "yes" to you or anyone. The only thing POSSIBLY being held back...is you saying "yes" to HIM! As John Calvin famously said, "*God is infinitely compassionate and infinitely ready to forgive (and bless), so that it ought to be ascribed exclusively to our unbelief if we do not obtain (that) pardon (and blessing) from Him.*" **You see?**...In a sense, what Jesus is saying with all this whole parable is: "Don't be like Ronald Wayne." You probably don't know Ronald Wayne and that's for good reason, because Ronald Wayne was one of the 3 original founders of a little company called...Apple. And the reason you've never heard of Ronald Wayne, even though

he created both the first Apple Computer Manual, and even Apple Logo is cuz less than two weeks after founding Apple in 1976 and receiving a 10% stake in the company, he sold his stock...for \$800...Stock which today would be worth more than \$55 billion.⁴ Probably some “weeping and gnashing of teeth” there...***How much more with Jesus and His Kingdom?*** Cuz Friend, there is no life apart from Jesus and the party that IS His kingdom. And where this is no life, there’s only death and hell. And YET, BOTH death and hell are SO needless for you, your friends, your neighbors, co-workers, family-members, anybody, GIVEN what Jesus has already done!...Don’t be a spiritual Ronald Wayne! Believe and receive what God’s done for you in Christ. And then do everything you can to help others believe and receive it too! ***Let’s Pray... Amen!***

⁴ <https://investinganswers.com/articles/5-costly-missed-business-opportunities>