**Clothed in Christ**

Based on [Matthew 22:1-14](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt22.1)

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When Jesus tells a parable, he often begins with the words “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to…” Today he says, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son…” **Jesus parables don’t always relate to our experiences of how things work on earth.** But, Jesus is not teaching about how things happen on earth. He’s using an earthly situation to show how things happen in heaven, that is, in God’s kingdom. And as God declares through Isaiah, “**My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

For instance…Jesus says that when the king sent his servants out to announce that the feast was ready, some ***seized the servants, treated.*** Perhaps that might happen to the ***bearer*** of bad news. The news of the king though is this: “**See, I have prepared my dinner…everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast**.” That’s good news!...and the King sends it out as good news. // “The feast *isn’t* ready” or “The feast is *cancelled*, the wedding is *off*” any of that might be bad news. Or the king announcing new taxes, or new oppressive laws…that might be bad news. But why would the announcement that “the feast is ready” be bad news? And not just bad news, but offensive, *scandalous* news that would cause those who hear it to kill the messenger?

This is the mystery, the inscrutable nature of the Good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and news of his coming is received as Gospel to some, and as an utter scandal to others. You can see this in the senseless rage of some who openly reject our faith today. **They accuse God of child abuse for sacrificing his own son. They regard God to be a tyrant who says “you should be as I made you to be.”** On account of these and other mysterious truths of the gospel, Jesus is called a scandal, a stumbling block that causes people to trip over him. In the preceding parable, he figured himself to be the corner--***stone***, and he ends that teaching with these words, “**And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him**.” (Matt 21:44).

Jesus’ parable today instructs us about the kingdom of ***heaven***. Nobody on earth would kill the messenger who says, “dinner’s ready, the bridegroom is come”. But the ***heavenly*** news that he is come and everything is ready is actually bad news to the ears of some, scandalous news. **We won’t psychologize as to why this is, Paul does and Jesus does elsewhere. Only realize this: It is to be expected that not everybody wants to hear about Jesus, and some hate him senselssly.**  What is such obviously *good* news to you, is received as offensive hate speech by others. This doesn’t mean don’t share the good news; it doesn’t mean stay at home and hide your faith and save your skin…that would not be beneficial to you. But don’t be surprised when others persecute you for sharing the news, and don’t be deluded to think that their rejection is somehow a blow to the church, or a blight on the gospel. Christ is the stone, he isn’t crushed, he does the crushing. Don’t weep for him, weep for yourselves and those children of Jerusalem that would not gather under the protection of his wings.

We should also notice that not all are hostile to the gospel. The other reaction of those first invited to the feast is indifference. **This is apparent in the visible church, where people *claim* to value Christ, but let every worldly business in their own lives take precedence over him and his teaching**. This is especially those whose actual priorities reveal they don’t value His sacrament, and don’t really value his teaching. Jesus says, **‘My words are spirit and life**’, but many Christians couldn’t quote a so much as a handful of Jesus’ words if asked of them? How does that make *any* sense? It doesn’t, and that’s why Jesus describes them as saying, “**Oh, I’m so honored and excited to be invited to the wedding feast**”, but when the time comes, they simply go about their usual daily business.” So God says, “**Those who were invited were not *worthy*.**”

Now, this is good news for those who were not invited initially. This compares with our churches today and what happens. I have known of many “cradle Lutherans”--those who were born and baptized into the confessional Lutheran church--who simply don’t know how good they have it. I was one growing up. **And I compare that with some of those I have know from the outside, who find the Lutheran Church. And they are so appreciative that they expect everyone in the church to be as grateful as they are, only to be confused, maybe even disappointed!** Some have come out of the tyranical Roman Catholic church, and they love having an infallible Bible rather than a fallible pope to submit to. Or they come from Evangelicalism or Reformed Churches, and adore having actual sacraments rather than symbols of an absent Christ. Therefore, you in the church pay attention not to squander or sell your birthright--because God will be angry with you, and give your inheritance to others you have not known.

Your inheritance is eternal life, **won** by Christ’s atoning sacrifice for your sins on the cross, **credited** to you in the forgiveness of sins, and **worn** by you through faith which enables you to stand in the judgment.

There is a final teaching in this parable, and it is of a man who was ***invited*** to the feast, ***showed up*** to the feast, but came ***unprepared*** for the feast. **A man comes to the feast without his wedding garment, without the appropriate clothes, and it is an insult to the King who had prepared such a feast in honor of his Son.** So an *invitation* to the feast is essential, and all have been invited; a ***willingness*** to come is essential and it is clear that not all people find God’s invisible grace all that worthwhile, but the final thing that is essential is being ***prepared*** to stand at the banquet.

This is what it means to be ***declared righteous***—right with god—by faith. We teach that *when the Christian believes in Jesus Christ, treasures his words and holds on to him in all trials and temptations*, that person has the very righteousness of Christ himself. **And when he stand before God now and on judgment day, he doesn’t see your sins and weaknesses. He won’t remember your faults and transgressions.** He sees his own son surrounding you, and clothing you in his white robe so that you appear as he has made you, holy and righteous in his sight.

**for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** Galatians 3:27

So, every day, when you get out of bed, pray to God, repent of your sins and so put on Christ…your baptism…your holy garment of faith. Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. **Be *prepared* to speak the truth with your neighbor. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.** If you were a thief, steal no longer. If you were a gossip or slanderer; *consecrate your* mouth and tongue to holiness in Christ. If you were a murderer, put away your hatred and love your enemies and *be prepared* to forgive them; as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you.