

**Matthew 22:1–33**

<sup>1</sup> And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup> and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ <sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ <sup>10</sup> And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup> And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.”

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. <sup>16</sup> And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. <sup>17</sup> Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” <sup>18</sup> But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup> Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” <sup>21</sup> They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” <sup>22</sup> When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

<sup>23</sup> The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, <sup>24</sup> saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ <sup>25</sup> Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. <sup>26</sup> So too the second and third, down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup> After them all, the woman died. <sup>28</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”

<sup>29</sup> But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. <sup>31</sup> And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: <sup>32</sup> ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” <sup>33</sup> And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

## Let's Warm Up: Questions to break the ice.

### 1. Have you ever hosted an event or gathering where nobody showed up? How did it feel?

Did you decorate your home and buy a birthday cake, only to have everyone cancel at the last minute? Maybe you were organizing a volunteer event for a good cause, but nobody signed up so you ended up serving alone. Have you received some lame, last-minute excuses on the day of the event?

Did you feel like nobody cared about you or your cause? I've always felt overwhelming loneliness when that happens. On the other side, maybe you're introverted and secretly excited you didn't have to deal with people.

In this week's passage, Jesus tells the parable of people refusing a royal wedding invitation.

### 2. How would you react to a celebrity or royalty wedding invitation?

What if you got an invitation to William and Kate's wedding and reception in 2011 (or, if you're old enough, Queen Elizabeth with Prince Philip in 1947)? Swifties, imagine Taylor Swift shows up at your door and says, "I'm getting married and I want you in my bridal party!" Sports fans, imagine the same thing, but with Messi (2017), Conor McDavid (2024), or Christine Sinclair. If these famous people don't excite you, substitute with your own, like Roy Donk or Anakin Skywalker.

Would you say, "Hold on, let me check my calendar and get back to you."? Or immediately cancel everything and book your hotels/flights? "Sorry, sis, I can't go to your wedding. I got invited to a *BETTER* wedding!"

In this week's passage, Jesus tells the parable of two groups of people responding to a royal wedding feast invitation.

### 3. Have you dressed inappropriately for an occasion? How did you feel?

Perhaps you realized that dressing up for Halloween was *not* part of the office culture when nobody else wore a costume. Have you visited a church and realized you were the only one formally or casually dressed? I was invited to a "casual walk in the woods" and wore casual shoes. Two hours later and halfway up the mountain, my feet were killing me. I wished I could give my car keys to a bird or squirrel to fetch the boots in my car.

In this week's passage, a man's dress code violation leads to dire consequences.

## Let's Get Started: Questions to start thinking about the main themes.

### 4. How can you draw the line between good and bad life compartmentalizing?

Compartmentalization isn't all bad. At the warehouse, you follow strict safety guidelines to be fully aware of your surroundings (<https://youtu.be/EBzBX1OppkQ>), but at home, you don't need to keep your head on a swivel. Counselors and therapists leave the trauma and tragedy at the clinic. They can't post on Instagram "You won't believe what my client said in therapy! Check the description for the story. #Confidential" You can tell your restaurant cook,

“Where are my rib platters? I placed the order 15 minutes ago!” I’ll have to confirm with Pastor Isaac, but I *think* men shouldn’t say that to their wives.

When does compartmentalizing become bad?

In this week’s sermon, the religious leaders had dangerous compartmentalization. I appreciate Brett’s summary of the different approaches. “If the goal of the Pharisees was to alienate the people from Jesus, the goal of the Sadducees is to discredit His teaching.” They said, “Yes! I want God. Let’s all experience God!” But when Jesus came, they said no, “Ok, not really. I’d rather have this instead.” They acted one way to the crowds, but a different way in private.

### 5. Why is God so patient in these parables?

In last week’s parable (Matthew 21:33-41), the king gives the tenants three chances to pay their rent, even though they respond violently each time. In this week’s parable, those who initially said they’d come said no at the last minute. In response, the king tries to encourage them to come. “Please come! I have a Michelin Three Star meal, fresh and hot out of the oven waiting for you!” I’m picturing something like Ina Garten’s brisket recipe (<https://youtu.be/gPagw3r4BP8>).

As I said last week, I would have immediately brought the hammer of retributive justice down on the tenants for abusing and killing my servants. In this one, I would have said, “Your loss”, and moved on to invite others. I’d spend more money to get some sushi (or poutine) party trays, book famous musicians to perform, and do whatever it took to make them regret turning down my party. I’d want to give them the biggest case of FOMO (fear of missing out)!

As Pastor Brett said, “The compassion of Jesus and the kindness of God are both meant to lead us to repentance and to draw us into closer relationship. The good news of the gospel is that He wants you at His table.” Jesus doesn’t just allow us at His table. He *wants* us there. He loves them so much that He even died to give them an invitation (John 3:16).

Many of us are familiar with the passage where God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). I’m reading *Gentle and Lowly* (Pastor Vinh’s top book pick for 2024). The author points out that the previous verses are God patiently and eagerly calling people to turn from evil and come to Him to be loved and pardoned (Isaiah 55:6-7). His compassion and patience are way beyond our understanding.

Let’s Dig In: Questions to discuss the passage and how we can respond.

### 6. Why was the guy without the wedding garment kicked out?

Pastor Brett pointed out that the king invited random people traveling on the main road at the last minute. Imagine flagging down drivers on Highway 1. I doubt any would be wearing wedding attire or have it in their trunk.

Many won't live nearby and can't make it home in time to change. Plenty also can't afford a proper formal outfit, because that can get expensive.

The meat's already cooked and "everything is ready" so the invitees probably went straight there. The attendees must have been given wedding clothes at the door. That means the guy must have refused to wear the provided wedding clothes or took it off. Either way, he tried to be at the wedding on his own terms.

Of course, Jesus isn't talking about physical clothing, but spiritual. When we come to God, we remove our attempts to earn God's forgiveness and love, our sinful desires, and other things that separate us from God. We put on Jesus' good works and death on the cross.

### **7. What tempts us to reject God's invitation?**

Some of us may be too busy, like the people in the parable. We have work, family, friendships, hobbies, sports leagues, must-see TV, and more. Do you make time to spend with God in prayer, reading His Word, and more?

We may have our own agendas. The religious system benefited the leaders financially and reputationally. They didn't want to change because it would hurt their bottom line. Many single people are so fixated on finding a significant other that they're willing to compromise their relationship with God. Others may drop God when it interferes with their financial goals or comfort. Are we willing to give up our pursuits to come to God?

### **8. Pastor Brett said, "The invitation to the party is radically inclusive, anyone can come, but the terms of the attendance are radically exclusive – you come through Jesus, or you don't come at all." Does this statement bring you relief or worry? Why?**

For some of us, it's a huge comfort.

"Thank you, Jesus, because there's no way I could make it on my own!"

"There's hope for my friends with shameful pasts because Jesus still loves them and can clean them up."

"God's love is so big that He sent His Son to die so we could be invited to His party."

Others might feel uncomfortable.

"I can't accept a free gift from Jesus. I feel like I have to earn it, just like everything else in life."

"Why would a good God let [insert notoriously evil person] in? That's not right!"

"I want to be with God, but I still want to live my life the way I like."

What's your reaction?

**9. What would it look like for you to put on Jesus' righteousness?**

Pastor Brett listed a few ways that spiritual renewal manifests.

- The Word is alive
- You are aware of His presence with you
- You deeply and slowly grieve your sin and come to repentance and are washed anew in His grace once more
- Prayer is constant and your conversations with God are deep and long and brief and sweet and everywhere in between.

Which do you want to pursue and what steps can you take this week to depend on Jesus to make it happen?

**10. Pastor Brett said, "This invitation isn't based on how good you've been, or how well you've lived in the past – it's not based on what you've done or what you've left undone, it's based on the grace of the King who opens his doors to the good and bad alike." Who in your life needs to hear this Good News?**

Some of us feel like utter failures because we've failed at school, work, relationships, and life. The King of the universe still wants us.

Statistically, more than half of us know someone who has had an abortion.<sup>1</sup> Chances are they struggle with regret and sadness.<sup>2</sup> Although they ended the life of their child, their heavenly Father still wants to give them a new life.

We encounter people from all sorts of religious backgrounds at our workplaces, our kids' schools, grocery stores, recreational sports leagues, and more.<sup>3</sup> No matter who or what they've been worshipping, God still desires them.

As a pastor, I've heard people tell me many times, "But you don't know what I've done ..." They're right. I don't. But God knows and He still invites them to feast at the King's table! That is good news! I remember sharing that with a young adult who came out of the closet to me. After our conversation, he said that it went better than he expected. I asked him what he meant. He told me he expected me to yell at him or something. It's so tragic that he thought God didn't want him.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://angusreid.org/abortion-canada-personal-experiences-unwanted-pregnancy/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10257365/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2021079-eng.htm>