October 15, 2023 **PRAISEWORTHY LIVING**

The passage for this Sunday speaks of yet another parable of Jesus Christ. This story provides a good window through which to view the events of Jesus’s time and our time. There is more to this story. The parables are not just cute little stories that illustrate a spiritual lesson. Sometimes that is the case. But other times, Jesus’ parables are more like riddles. They raise more questions than answers. It sheds some important light for anyone still trying to figure out how to understand Jesus. The punch line in this parable is what Jesus says, “For many are invited but few are chosen.”

Since we are going to meditate on the wedding invitation it reminds me of our Asian Indian weddings, the invitation usually comes from the head of the family, but in our wedding invitation, Vatsala and I invited like this: “We solicit the presence of your company with family and friends to grace the occasion of our wedding on...” This means that, 44 years ago, the invited person could bring any number of people along with him/her to the wedding without RSVP. But today it is different, it is just the invitees.

The story that Jesus speaks as a wedding banquet invitation, is divided into three acts. In the first, the invitation is offered. In the second, the invitation is rejected. The third is that the invitation is neglected!”

The First one the invitation is offered. The ancient wedding customs were much different than the modern version. But they had one thing in common. A wedding was a big, festive event. The concluding wedding feast could last for days. Friends and family came from far and near. The bridegroom was the king’s son. To be invited to such a wedding was a very big deal. People might boast about being there at the wedding for years to come.

Jesus says, “this is what the kingdom of heaven is like.” God’s planning a party and you’re invited. You got to understand that God has been inviting you all your life. He began the first time your grandmother told you a Bible story or your parents took you to the church. Even if that never happened, the invitation was extended when friends or relatives invited you to Sunday School or a neighbor asked you to go to a special church event. God was extending an invitation to you in one way or the other.

Everywhere and every time, you’ve heard a Christian song on the radio or Bible preacher on television, God has been knocking on the door and tugging at your heart. Every time your conscience heated up or you felt an inner yearning for something more from life, God was calling you to the best time of your life. God has spread everything on the table. And you have been invited! Even if you didn’t know it before, you do know now!

The second is that the invitation is offered but rejected. In ancient times, two invitations would be sent. The first would go out well in advance, maybe months ahead of time. Messengers would hand deliver this invitation as information. “The king’s son is getting married next fall. The banquet will be right after the harvest. He wants you there.” The potential guests would acknowledge the invitation and declare their intention to come. Then when the time arrives for the festivities, a second invitation will arrive with the details like “Be there next Friday by Sun set.”

Here the story in the parable turns ugly. Some of the king’s guests ignore the message and go about business as usual. They considered their business more important than the king’s. Others respond with anger and violence. The potential guests rejected more than an invitation to a feast. They rejected the king himself. Do you see the picture? This is the way God deals with us. Both the transformed life that Christ creates and the heaven that follows are by invitation only. But no one is forced.

You can, though it makes no sense, decline the Lord’s offer. You can go all the way through life without ever accepting the invitation to the Lord’s great feast. You don’t have to go to the banquet. We can ignore the Lord’s offer, or we get hostile. Either way, the results are the same. Two things will happen. First, the Lord will respond. Judgment day is coming. It may not be tomorrow. It may not happen for years. But it will one day.

Those who had rejected the invitation, the Lord will regret their choice. But it was theirs! Are you rejecting the invitation or neglecting the invitation? If you would like to learn more, please join us in our Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

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