

Matthew 22:1-14

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[0 : 00] Matthew 22, 1-14. When Chris did the reading, if you're familiar with the Bible, you might have thought déjà vu. You might have said to yourself, I've read something very like that somewhere else before.

And you'd be quite right, wouldn't you? Because if you're precisely in Luke's Gospel, in chapter 14, there's another parable, or story, and Jesus sounds almost identical.

But it's quite different, and quite distinct. A story about a man who was holding a feast, and he sent out invitations, which was normal for a feast.

And then people were pressed to come. And the emphasis of that parable, if you remember it, is that people made excuses. Got a field, got lots, and all sorts of things. I'm getting married. I can't come.

The emphasis of this parable, though, is there's a king who has made a feast. And this feast is a wedding feast, and the person who's getting married is his son.

[1 : 07] And the emphasis, as we're going to look at it, is not so much on the excuses that are made, as upon the refusal of those who were invited.

They refused even after repeated invitations. And we'll see how the way that they refused elicited the anger of the king. And the account of Matthew has a sting in the tale, it adds a little bit, a particularly sharp reminder that the invitation the king gave is to be accepted on the king's terms. And so the story is a different one from Luke 14. Here in Matthew 22, the circumstances of this story are different. Jesus has been engaged, has he, with controversy with the religious leaders. It's the start of the week, when he will be killed on the Friday. And they're moving to the point where they're trying to ensnare him, and arrest him, and destroy him. And they hope to silence him forever.

They're challenging him on his authority. Who do you think you are? He teaches and performs miracles. And it's within that context that Jesus tells this remarkable story.

[2 : 20] There are four scenes in the story. In verses 1 to 6, there is the invitation. The rejection of an invitation.

In verse 7, there is the indignation of the king. The king is enraged and sent in his army. And then thirdly, you see, the third scene is, this invitation is redirected to an altogether different company of people.

And then the final scene is the exclusion of an intruder. For those who are listening when Jesus preached, it wouldn't have been difficult for those who immediately grasp who and what he was speaking about.

All of these parables focus on them. He is addressing the Jewish leaders. He's addressing the people who are already plotting his death. And he's at the same time explaining to them his ministry.

And it doesn't take much imagination or much knowledge to see that Jesus is speaking about that. When the king gives his invitation.

[3 : 28] When he's preparing the marriage of his son. And the invitation is pressed upon the king's subjects. And they refuse. And the king is angry. It's very easy for you and I to see exactly who Jesus is speaking about.

And as we go through, you'll see that this is not only speaking to those original hearers. But the sting in the tale is we find ourselves in this story this morning. So first of all, the rejection of an invitation.

The rejection of an invitation. You need to realize that there's a preliminary scene which we all get here. Jesus doesn't even speak about it because it was taken for granted that when anyone was

sending out invitations in this particular time in history.

There was of course no postal service. No email. No church suite. No Facebook. No Insta. But they did have couriers.

And the king had couriers who were his servants. And he dispatched through the kingdom with the initial invitation that we don't see here that his son was getting married. The invitations are not like the wedding invitations we receive.

[4 : 41] Saying there's going to be a wedding on such a time and such a date in such a place.

There was a kind of casual and laid back attitude towards times and dates. And what would happen is that the messenger would initially have gone and said that the king's son is getting married.

You're welcome to come. But then he would have sent another messenger. He would have gone and said the people concerned. And he would have said everything is ready.

When that initial invitation came nobody thought of saying where and when and what time. Because the invitation would be repeated. And that's why you get the king saying the food is ready.

Everything is now ready. Come. So the invitation that we read up in verse 1 and verse 2 is actually the second invitation.

It was the pressing personally of an invitation which had been delivered earlier. And the couriers went back out when the wedding plans had come to a climax.

[5 : 46] And they say everything is ready. They would have allowed just the right amount of time for people to come to make their way to the king's banquet in Paul. And they went out and they pressed this invitation on those people.

And what happened was totally unpredictable. The altogether unbelievable happened. To be invited to any wedding we know, don't we, is a privilege.

But to be invited to the royal wedding that's a great privilege. To be invited to the wedding of the king's son just imagine you've got an invitation to a royal wedding.

An invitation sent out from the greatest person that they could have imagined for the greatest occasion that they could ever have imagined. they were, weren't they, the most privileged of people.

And so it's an extraordinary thing to receive this information and the amazing thing is they turned it down. All of them. You'd have almost thought that there was a pact.

[6 : 53] They refused the invitation. And the most remarkable thing of all is that the king then sent his servants back. And said there must be some kind of mistake.

The servants went back again and they paid no attention. What makes their refusal even more extraordinary is the number of times they were asked.

It's the third time. The third time they'd be invited to the wedding. The trouble that the king has gotten to the nature of the feast is a glorious and lavish affair.

And the nature of their reply well it's extraordinary. Look at verse 5. But they paid no attention and went off. They just ignored him.

One went off his field another went off his business. They were indifferent about the king's invitation. They were apathetic. They couldn't care less. And they were really saying to him they were saying to him in our lives and in our plans you and your plans have no place.

[8 : 11] Do you see the application there? In our lives and in our plans you and your plans have no place. And so they went on in their daily business.

But not all of them. I'm looking very sick. Some of them get angry. Some of them react violently.

And they didn't respond with apathy and care less but with antipathy with anger and rebellion and hostility and enmity towards the king.

And some of his servants mistreated them and killed them. So for some reason we're not told in the parable the overtures of the king and the summons they received to enter into his plans and receive the riches of what he was giving them infuriates them.

You ask yourself as you read it what unburden would stop you gladly accepting and coming but instead it actually enraged them. it produced a venom and a hatred in them that ultimately led to murder because they murdered his servants and abused others.

And it wouldn't be taking much thought for this or much imagination for the Pharisees in some corner of their minds to recognise that Jesus is describing them precisely and describing their ancestors because what were they planning to do what were they plotting to do they were planning to kill him.

[9 : 50] The glorious good news good news of restoration and joy and forgiveness and God's kingdom coming it had produced in these people what? Envy and anger and rebelliousness and hatred.

And so by the end of the week they had been crucified. And down through the years the ancestors of these people had stoned and killed the prophets. They had reacted against God's servants with violence and rage.

And you say what a generation are they in? How primitive these people were. How uncultured. How uncultivated. But you know it's not just true is it to say that a reaction to the Lord Jesus and the gospel and the riches of God that's offered in Jesus Christ when that's offered to people it's not true just to say that the reaction is apathy today in our world.

There is isn't there really infuriatingly enormous amounts of apathy in our culture. Materialism that preoccupation with the business of our daily life has blinded people for real values.

That certainly happened. Sultan Eatsen spoke about the western world that it was like a shop window where all the price tags have been changed and so the cheap things are the most expensive and the really valuable things are priced cheaply.

[11 : 24] And the estimates that our culture puts on all manner of things is crazily upside down. And so people value things which are worth nothing and that which is worth most important is not valid at all.

There's an enormous amount of apathy from the dead and the blind and we must never be surprised when we find that.

We find ourselves dealing with it but there's something else isn't there? When people hear about the Lord Jesus and they understand his claim on their life we see particularly in dead religion.

When the invitation comes to the Lord Jesus Christ and from the Lord Jesus Christ and people understand what the message of Jesus is all about that it is about you and I being naturally spiritually dead and we need new life and we are under the wrath of God unless we accept his son.

What is that? There is often anger and there is often incense outrage how dare you believe that?

We find don't we that when somebody is confronted with the authentic gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with that sobering reality of his kingly right of the living God over every single one of us it's amazing isn't it how apathy gives way to anger don't you find that?

[13 : 00] So it's not surprising we're taking to the second scene which is in verse 7 and that is the indignation of the king the indignation of the king now the reason the king responded and he did the king is enraged he sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burnt their city was that they mistreated his servants of course but the reason the king reacted in the way that he did was not simply because they were ungrateful and impolite and they were rude but it was simply because they were his mutinous subjects you see these people whom the invitation went out to could not simply say I've got nothing to do with him I don't know him his invitation is irrelevant to me I've got no relationship with him and I don't want it and he's got no relationship with me and the longer that continues the better I've got no interest in

God I don't do God he's got nothing to do with me and I want nothing to do with him if he does exist I'm a free man or a free woman or a free boy and a free girl and I will do whatever I want and I don't want him interfering the simple truth is that that position is just a figment of our imagination because this morning whether you like it or not you do have a relationship with him whether you want it or whether you don't you have a relationship with God because he is your rightful king in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the second they came and they presented her to the lords and the commons in Westminster and they said I present you I present to you Elizabeth our undoubted queen and the lords rose and the commons rose and they said God save the queen and what I am saying to this morning what every faithful preacher of the gospel should be saying to you is in the name of

God I present to you your undoubted king whose name is Jesus Christ the king of kings and lord of lords and you are his subject whether you want to be or not is irrelevant God has made him king of kings and lord of lords and you are his subject this morning and because these are his subjects and the king sent out his army and after repeated impetitions and repeated rebellion and repeated refusal his patience came to an end but you say to me God will never do that let me read to you a verse from Genesis 6 in Genesis 6 the story of Noah when God's patience ran out in the days of Noah and God said my spirit shall not strive always with man and God sent judgment and that's exactly what

Jesus is telling us here there will be a day when the patience of God runs out the king's lavish hospitality they would never experience but his wrath and his judgment they did the third scene the rejection of an invitation the indignation of the king and thirdly wonderfully the redirection of the invitation look at verses 8 to 10 notice the point of this the wedding banquet is now ready but those who are invited do not deserve to come they refuse to come so the king says you go to the street corners and you invite to the banquet and you find anyone you can and they come back to him and they say we've done that but there's still room and they gathered together all the people they could find and the wedding hall was filled with guests the whole point is that the king's plans were changed you know when they rebelled against him and when they turned against him these people and when they murdered his servant they thought that's the end of it it's all over and done with but the king's plans have not changed he was going ahead with his purpose he was going to have a wedding banquet for his son and what changed was those who were invited and I want to say to you this morning that in seeking to set yourself against the sovereign purpose of the holy God that is described here by his son the

Lord Jesus by setting yourself against him that will not change God's plans but it will lead to you breaking yourself against his sovereign will that's what it leads to exactly what happened the original invitation went out and it was rejected and then the king turned to all manner of people and the invitation was sent to the good and the bad and the ugly and it was sent to the outsiders and again do you see how the parallels be applied the king the king was God and the invited guests initially they are his people Israel whom he has called out of Egypt he says out of Egypt I have called my son that's what he said the wedding feast might well be a reference to our messianic banquet which Jewish tradition spoke of the servants the servants would have been his prophets [19:10] Isaiah Jeremiah Hosea who came and came again to Israel offering the invitation and John the Baptist and now the Lord Jesus Christ but they rejected and they stoned and they killed the messengers and they were about to crucify Jesus Christ but now the new guests are invited and they are outsiders you know who they were the people like you the people like me they were Gentiles Jesus himself at the end of this gospel repeats that invitation doesn't he what we call the great commission but the gospel the message of the kingdom is to go out into all the world and we are to make disciples of all nations which includes Gentiles that's why the apostle Paul went out and said he was sent by God to the

Gentiles to the world the apostle Paul is like the invitation of going out a second time to Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and all the ends of the earth he's inact and he embraces all who will hear and come and of course that's always been God's plan it was prophesied and predicted through the Old Testament you think of Isaiah those who are not my people will be called my people and that's what Jesus is speaking about here he's speaking about us and so the application of the parable is really obvious to us so far but there's a fourth scene it's a thing in the tale it's the exclusion of an intruder not an outsider don't think that for they're all outsiders aren't they they all come in at the second invitation it's not a gate crasher like we would call them they'd all been invited but he stood out amongst the guests as an intruder he stood out as the only man who was not wearing the proper dress notice

I'm the king in verse 11 he comes in and he looks at the guests and he saw that there was a man who had no wedding garment no wedding clothes now since all the others had wedding clothes and they'd been rounded up from the streets remember and everywhere they could be found it is quite impossible this man was not wearing the proper wedding outfit it's quite impossible that he wasn't wearing the proper wedding outfit because he couldn't afford it that's what some people think the commentators quite extraordinarily stupidly suggest that but what had happened obviously was that the king had provided the proper wedding dress these people that came in from all over the place from the highways and the byways they came in from the streets they had no money they had nothing and the king provides for them but here is a man who is unwilling to come to the wedding on the king's terms that's the point certainly not that he couldn't afford it he came to the of course he wished to receive the invitation he wanted to participate in this lavish reception the riches of the king that he was laying on for them but he was determined to come on his own terms

I'm not going to wear what the king has given me that's what he's saying and arrogantly he comes not as the king chose and not as the king chose into he refused the king's provision there's little doubt really that what Jesus is referring to in the parable is what Isaiah talks about Isaiah 61 verse 10 Isaiah 61 10 let me read it to you it speaks about when he says this he says I will rejoice greatly

in the Lord Isaiah says my soul will exalt him in my God because he has clothed me with the garments of salvation he has wrapped me in a robe of righteousness he has clothed me in the garments of salvation he has wrapped me in robes of righteousness and that is Isaiah 61 verse 10 and so this man at the wedding feast and the host of the wedding feast he would have offered to him garments of salvation he's provided for him the robe of righteousness they need the garments of salvation they cannot choose how they will appear before the king they have to take what the king has given and be wrapped in his righteousness and clothed with the garments of salvation you see it's not just a matter of receiving and healing and accepting an invitation from God you can only come to

God on God's terms and being clothed not with a marriage of your own and a righteousness of your own but only in the righteousness that he offers to you now what about your response to God's invitation this morning what about it there's a personal element isn't it to Jesus teaching which is inescapable don't turn away at this point and say to yourself well I know exactly where he's going he's going to talk about he's going to appeal to those who've never received Christ that they might have the right attitude I want us to think more than that how do you respond to the word of God and the invitations of God in Jesus Christ this morning so what about the apathy what about the preoccupation with the business of daily living the preoccupation with the business of daily living that shuts out the living God and eternal matters out of your life and consciousness by and large for large chances of the week we talk about apathy in the world but God knows how much we should be concerned about apathy in the church apathy towards

[26 : 24] God amongst his people and what about anger against God hostility to his demands refusal to bow before his rightful place in our life refusal of his rights we're really into our rights aren't we we're obsessed with our rights but what about God's rights in your life this morning you should like study Matthew 22 what I've noticed is that I am far nearer than I imagine to the people that I read about in this story and what about entering the kingdom by profession yeah I've accepted the invitation and then going on to try to be part of the whole scene in my own terms you see there is a great deal more for us to ask God to write into our hearts here and we need to pray that in his mercy he will help us not to run away from it let's pray

Thank you.