

Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

22:1-14

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

The parable related in these verses is one of very wide signification. In its first application it unquestionably points to the Jews. But we may not confine it to them. It contains heart-searching lessons for all among whom the Gospel is preached: it is a spiritual picture which speaks to us this day, if we have an ear to hear. The remark of a learned divine is wise and true: "Parables are like many-sided precious stones, cut so as to cast luster in more than one direction." Let us observe in the first place that the salvation of the Gospel is compared to a marriage feast. The Lord Jesus tells us that a certain king made a marriage for his son. There is in the Gospel a complete provision for all the wants of man's soul: there is a supply of everything that can be required to relieve spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. Pardon, peace with God, lively hope in this world, glory in the world to come are set before us in rich abundance. It is a feast of fat things. All this provision is owing to the love of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. He offers to take us into union with himself, to restore us to the family of God as dear children, to clothe us with his own righteousness, to give us a place in his kingdom, and to present us faultless before his Father's throne at the last day. The Gospel, in short, is an offer of food to the hungry, of joy to the mourner, of a home to the outcast, of a loving friend to the lost. It is glad tidings. God offers, through his dear Son, to be at one with sinful man. Let us not forget this. Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Let us observe in the second place, that the invitations of the Gospel are wide, full, broad and unlimited. The Lord Jesus tells us in the parable that the king's servants said to those who were bidden, "all things are ready. Come unto the marriage." There is nothing wanting on God's part for the salvation of sinners' souls: no one will ever be able to say at last that it was God's fault, if he is not saved. The Father is ready to love and receive; the Son is ready to pardon and cleanse guilt away; the Spirit is ready to sanctify and renew; angels are ready to rejoice over the returning sinner; grace is ready to assist him; the Bible is ready to instruct him; heaven is ready to be his everlasting home. One thing only is needful, and that is, the sinner must be ready and willing himself. Let this also never be forgotten: let us not quibble and split hairs upon the point. God will be found clear of the blood of all lost souls. The Gospel always speaks of sinners as responsible and accountable beings; the Gospel places an open door before all mankind: no one is excluded from the range of its offers. Though efficient only to believers, those offers are sufficient for all the world: though few enter the strait gate, all are invited to come in. Let us observe in the third place, that the salvation of the Gospel is rejected by many to whom it is offered. The Lord Jesus tells us that those whom the king's servants bade to the wedding made light of it and went their way. There are thousands of hearers of the Gospel who derive

from it no benefit whatever. They listen to it Sunday after Sunday, and year after year, and do not believe to the saving of the soul. They feel no special need of the Gospel; they see no special beauty in it; they do not perhaps hate it, or oppose it, or scoff at it, but they do not receive it into their hearts. They like other things far better. Their money, their land, their business, or their pleasures, are all far more interesting subjects to them than their souls. It is an awful state of mind to be in, but awfully common. Let us search our own hearts, and take heed that it is not our own. Open sin may kill its thousands; but indifference and neglect of the Gospel kill their tens of thousands. Multitudes will find themselves in hell not so much because they openly broke the Ten Commandments as because they made light of the truth. Christ died for them on the cross, but they neglected him. Let us observe in the last place that all false professors of religion will be detected, exposed and eternally condemned at the last day. The Lord Jesus tells us that when the wedding was at last furnished with guests, the king came in to see them, and "saw a man which had not on a wedding garment. He asked him how he came in there without one, and he received no reply; and he then commanded the servants to bind hand and foot, and take him away. There will always be some false professors in the church of Christ, as long as the world stands. In this parable, it has been truly remarked, "one single castaway represents all the rest." It is impossible to read the hearts of men: deceivers and hypocrites will never be entirely excluded from the ranks of those who call themselves Christians. So long as a man professes subjection to the gospel, and lives an outwardly correct life, we dare not say positively that he is not clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But there will be no deception at the last day: the unerring eye of God will discern who are his own people, and who are not. Nothing but true faith shall abide the fire of his judgment; all spurious Christianity shall be weighed in the balance and found wanting: non but true believers shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It shall avail the hypocrite nothing that he has been a loud talker about religion, and had the reputation of being an eminent Christian among men. His triumphing shall be but for a moment: he will be stripped of his borrowed plumage, and stand naked and shivering before the bar of God, speechless, self-condemned, hopeless and helpless. He shall be cast into outer darkness with shame, and reap according as he has sown. Well may our Lord say, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Let us learn wisdom from the solemn pictures of this parable, and give diligence to make our calling and election sure. We ourselves are among those to whom the word is spoken: "All things are ready. Come to the marriage." Let us see that we refuse not him that speaketh. Let us not sleep as others do, but watch and be sober. Time hastens on. The king will soon come in to see the guests: have we or have we not got on the wedding garment? Have we put on Christ? That is the grand question that arises out of this parable. May we never rest till we can give a satisfactory answer! May those heart-searching words daily ring in our ears, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

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