

Preparation for the King's Supper

Preached in New Hope Reformed Fellowship Church, Middleville, MI,
on Sunday morning, June 12, 2022 by C. VanSteenselen.

Text: Matt. 22:1-14
Psalter 222:4,6
Psalter 52:2-3
Psalter 280:1-2
Psalter 196

Congregation,

Why did Jesus speak in parables? Why did He tell the people vivid pictures of things in daily life? He wanted to show with such examples spiritual realities. Think about the parable of the sower. His sowing resulted in different fruits. Christ wanted to tell that this is a picture of gospel preaching. There will be different fruit. Those parables were not simply stories. No, it contained a lesson.

This Jesus also did with a specific situation. Israel had received God's Word in Old Testament times. God sent many prophets and preachers to them. But what was the issue? Israel did not listen. They rejected the preaching. They even killed prophets by stoning or by the sword. Not only the common people did this. No, also the religious leaders took part in that. That is why Jesus tells another parable. The parable of the king who makes a marriage supper for his son. We will find various elements in this parable that are applicable for the Lord's Supper.

Theme: Preparation for the King's Supper

- I. The Call to the Supper
- II. The True Partaker of the Supper
- III. The False Partaker of the Supper

I. The Call to the Supper

It's Readiness

We read in verse 8, “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.” To understand our text, we need to go back to the first verses of the chapter. The first verse shows that the king makes a wedding feast for his son. This is a picture of the kingdom of God. What does the parable then depict? That God has prepared a marriage for His Son Jesus Christ. The verses that follow tell that the king sends his servants to call those that are invited. You have to know that in Bible times people were invited various times. The first time was a long before the actual wedding. This was simply to tell that a wedding would take place. The second time, people got another invitation with the exact date and time. In our text, these invitations had already taken place. This is the third time that servants are sent to tell that all things were ready. But what happened? Did these people come? No. They rejected to come. Others even hurt and killed the servants. What does Christ want to show? As we said at the beginning, God had sent prophets to Israel, but they had stone and killed them.

And still we read that the “wedding is ready.” What is that wedding? This is the wedding feast itself. You have to know something about Jewish weddings to understand the parable. One year before the wedding the couple had the betrothal. It is a bit comparable with our engagement but much more official. Both parties would sign a contract. This contract was of a binding nature. If one party separated from the other, it was a divorce. But what happened in that year that followed? The man would go home and prepare his house for the bride. Jesus refers to this in John 14. He goes to heaven to prepare a place for His bride there. And now in our text we have arrived to the moment of the wedding feast. This feast would be a week long. It included meals, wine, music and religious rituals. On the first day, women would prepare the food and clean the house. That is why weddings would begin in the evening. In our text all things are ready. That means, everything is prepared. What is the spiritual meaning of all this? God has prepared a marriage between His Son Jesus Christ and the church. And after Christ's first coming, all things are ready. He has paid the price. And now the call goes out: all things are ready. Yes, this call first came to the Jews only, but later also to the gentiles.

Application

Congregation, let us draw a few lines. Next week, the Lord's Supper will take place in your midst. As with the wedding in our parable, you knew it before. It was in your agenda. Next week all things will be ready. The house will be cleansed, the table prepared, bread and wine will be available. But the question is, are you truly ready? Is your heart truly prepared? Our text showed that many rejected to come. They had either no time or despised it. This is also what the world does with the Lord's Supper. They despise it. They think that it is only bread and wine. But what about us? How do we value it? Do we have to say that we belong to those that are unworthy? It is true that the Lord's Supper is only for the true believers. No, others are not allowed to partake. But the supper will be ready. May we say this, from God's side all things are ready. Everything is prepared. The price is paid. Food and drink are there. But are you prepared for it? That means, do you know Christ in truth? If that is the case, is your heart prepared? Because the call will go out, “Come, for all things are ready.” But if we look to our parable, what will happen? Will there be no guests? No. The king will send his servants again.

It's Call

The call is found in verse 9, “Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.” Where do these servants need to go? We read “into the highways.” No, they no longer go to the homes of the rich or inhabitants of the city. That means God sends His servants not to the Jews again. But the servants in the parable have to go to the highways. That are crossroads, open squares, and roads that exit the city. We can say, the main streets. Places where many pass by. Maybe even to places where you will see beggars sitting. But what is the point that Jesus wants to make? Well these highways point to the territories of the gentiles. We read in Luke that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). And now are these servants commanded to go there. Yes, God's servants need to go out and preach. They have to call sinners to repentance. But what do the servants in the parable have to do? We read, “bid to the marriage.” Literally, it means to call or invite these people to the wedding. The gospel call goes out and all are invited. To what? The marriage. Yes, spiritually it means a call to be united with Christ. It shows that promises and salvation is proclaimed to the gentiles. Yes, those that were not invited before are now welcome. Are they than better than the Jews? No. We will see that later. But this only happens because of God's goodness.

Application

Congregation, do we realize that we belong to the gentiles? The parable shows that the only reason that gentiles will be saved is God Himself. Yes, God's servants go out to each place. What do they have to do? To proclaim the gospel. Especially to bid to the marriage. Yes, that eternal marriage with Christ. That is why they call sinners to repentance and faith.

Next week the Lord's Supper will take place. Then the servants say, the Supper is ready. You are bidden to the marriage. But we have to be clear, congregation. The invitation to Lord's Supper is restricted. Not all congregants are allowed to sit at the table. Who then are allowed? Only those that know something of the King and His Son. They have learned that they are unworthy to sit there. But God's grace makes them to come. Ah, yes, the parable will show that there are two types of partakers. Both partakers eat, drink and ‘enjoy’ it. The one has a right but the other not. That is why we need to examine ourselves, congregation. The parable makes clear that not all that partake of the Lord's Supper are true children of God. The question to us is, do we have that divine right to come? Maybe that is exactly your question. May I come? Do I have a divine right? How do I know? Let us give an answer that flows out of the parable. Who were allowed to come? Those with a call. We can say this, those that have had an internal call may come. What call? Then was urged to come unto Christ with your burden. He would give you rest. And then you came. Do you know about that burden? Do you know about that call and coming at His feet? Those that truly did are allowed to sit at the table. Let us go deeper into the question who are called and who are true partakers. That is our second thought.

II. The True Partaker of the Supper

The Partakers Gathered

In the first place, we read that these partakers are gathered. See verse 10, “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together.” Who gather? We read, “those servants went out.” Literally it says that they are slaves. They are in service of their master. Their master has bought them with a price. And now do they obediently their work. The term “servants” is also used for the ministers of the gospel. For example, Paul calls himself, “a servant

of Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:1). Literally he speaks of himself as a slave. In our parable, the slaves went out. They went abroad. What do we see? That they are obedient to their master. They go to the places he told them to go. And what did the servants do? It says, they “gathered together.” The word that is used here is almost the same as a word we know, “synagogue.” What is a synagogue? A place for an assembly. A location to gather together. Well, that is the case here. The servants gather people together for an assembly. And what do they gather? Is that animals? No. But they found humans. Yes, of different sorts, male and female, rich and poor. And remember. They will be the guests at the wedding of the son of the king. But what is the spiritual meaning of all this? God’s servants send out to gather sinners to salvation. They are also used to gather a poor people to the table of the Lord. They simply do what is commanded.

Application

Congregation, how did the guests in the parable come to the feast? Did they come at their own initiative? Did they bring themselves there? Oh, no! The parable is very clear. They *were* gathered. They *were* brought in. It was only because of the invitation of the master that they were welcome. May we ask you, if you partook of the Lord’s Supper, how did you come? Did you bring yourself there? Or did God call you to the table? Oh, those that belong to the latter category know that they have no right of themselves. They have a low view of self. And at the same time they know that they are called by God’s servants. Yes, even by God Himself. They cannot go but they must go. Is it maybe different with you? You think, “I did confession of faith. I have some experiences. I know of some change.” May we ask you, does that give you a right to sit at the table? Maybe you say, “But I come already for years.” Does that change anything? No. But who may come? Those that are gathered by God. Yes, that will be different persons, men and women, rich and poor. No, they may not come because of their own worthiness, but only because of the authority of the Master. No, at the table will be no difference. All will know themselves as unworthy. But they know that their master is so worthy.

My unconverted traveler, next week, you are not allowed to come to the table. Please do not do! You miss something important that is needed to partake. But be not discouraged. There is another gathering that still takes place. What is that? The call of the gospel. That call goes out to all. What does it tell you? That you must forsake your sinful ways and worldly pleasures. That you must turn with all your sins to the Lord. Maybe you ask, but who are gathered? Is it only well-dressed persons? Are that only nice people? Let’s look to the parable.

The Partakers Described

We find a description of the partakers in verse 10, “all as many as they found, both bad and good.” How many are gathered? It says, “as many as they found.” All sorts of guests are found. The servants do not make any distinction. No, they do not check their background, the place where they lived, or nationality. Spiritually we can say that many different kind of people will be saved. That will be from all nationalities, cultures, and countries. Yes, they will come from America, Europe, and Asia. Ah, yes, they are found. The guests did not come themselves. No, they needed the servants for that. And still it is true “as many as.” What a wonder. But who do the servants find? We read, “both bad and good.” This is a difficult sentence, especially it has to be seen in spiritual light. What does good mean? Is it someone that will be saved by self-righteousness? Are that the pharisees? No. But “good” means honorable and outwardly upright. We could translate it in our day and age with churchgoers and those that are morally acceptable. The bad ones are those that live in sin. They have a history. They have committed sin. Maybe they have spent some time in jail. They are despised. They are wicked and morally corrupt. Think about Bunyan before his conversion. He cursed the name of the LORD. He played sports on the Lord’s Day. And the Lord showed him, if he would continue with his sports on Sunday, he would go to hell. So the phrase both bad and good describes character of people before their conversion. It is the way how they lived outwardly.

Application

Congregation, what a picture we find in our text of the gospel call. All that are found may come No. Again, they did not bring themselves but are found.

Child of the Lord, is this not your hope? The servants found the guests, not the guests the king. Do you see? The servants do not look for any qualifications or background. No, if that would be the case, it is hopeless. We read in Ezekiel that they lay in the field polluted in their blood (Ezek. 16:6). Do you know of that, friend? These guests did.

Someone asks, “I have a bad background. I did not grow up in the church. I have had a very evil life. Is the gospel for me?” May we say this? Who were welcome in the parable? We read of those that are bad and good. The servants make no difference in their invitation. Yes, some live outwardly a decent life. But their heart is wicked too. Others lived in sin, but they are also welcome. Therefore, friend, the gospel comes also to you. Flee with all your sin to Christ. Yes, that means that a change will take place. Then you can no longer live as you do now.

Partakers of the Lord's Supper. May we ask you, are you found *by* God or did *you* find God? That is a difference between day and night. Those that truly belong to God know of the former. They know, if God did not find me, I would have never come. For them, it is truly a wonder that they may sit at the table. No, not that they have any right. But they know that their Master is there. And their desire is to sup with Him. Lay your life next to it, who are you? But what happens in the parable? Will people come? Will there be guests sitting at the table? Will the king have a feast? Yes.

The Partakers Reclined

That partakers recline at the table, we find in verse 10, “And the wedding was furnished with guests.” Yes, it will become true, the “wedding was furnished.” That means, it was filled with guests. It was full. The same word we read when the disciples caught many fish. Luke says, “And they came, and *filled* both the ships [with multitude fishes], so that they began to sink” (Luke 5:7). What does this mean spiritually? The number of those that will enter heaven cannot be counted. It will be full. In our parable, we read that the wedding was filled “with guests.” Literally it speaks of those that recline at the table or sit at meal. One example is that Jesus “sat down with the twelve” (Matt. 26:20). But let us ask a question, what is required to sit at the wedding feast? A wedding garment. Later we will hear that one did not have it. But only those with a wedding garment are worthy partakers. In the parable is that an outer garment. How did that look like? We need to compare that with Revelation. How is it described there? We read that they are clothed with an array of fine linen. A robe that is white and clean (Rev. 7:9, 19:7-9). White shows purity and cleansing. It is a garment suitable for this wedding. It is fitting for this joyous occasion. What does this garment point to spiritually? Covering in the sight of God. A covering for sin. That means, someone has the righteousness of Christ. He has the beginning of sanctification in his life. Yes, these garments were given at the entrance. It also meant that the old garment would be taken off.

Application

Child of the Lord, do you see the wonder? There is a people that will sit at the marriage feast of the Son of God. Yes, it will be full. No one that need to be there will be missed. Oh, no. All the elect will be there. All those that are truly called will sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What a rejoicing will that be. Yes, the Lord's Supper will give a small foretaste of heaven. At the earthly table, God's children may sit and sup with their Master. But how is that possible? Because of their own righteousness? Because of their own experiences? Ah, no! The parable shows that all true partakers have received a wedding garment. That means, they are cleansed by the blood of Christ. They have received His righteousness. When did they receive that? In the parable, it was at the entrance hall. Spiritually, the child of the Lord receives that when he truly came to Christ and fell at His feet. Then their old filthy rags were taken off, and they received a new garment.

Unconverted friend, do you see what is needed for partaking? Yes, that garment. Ah, the invitation will be there. That is both the gospel invitation and the invitation for partaking of the Lord's Supper. No, you cannot go. You lack that covering for sin. But what is the main issue? You do not see the need. You might think that you can partake without. But what a tragedy that will be. What an awakening in the day of days. Seek to get this wedding garment. If you do not, your situation will be as we describe later. Because the question is, are all partakers in the parable true ones? They were all invited. But were they fitting? No. We read of a false partaker. That is our third thought.

III. The False Partaker of the Supper

The Lack

What is this person lacking? That is said in verse 11, “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.” Let's first look who is checking here. Is it one of the servants? No. They had done their work. It is the “king.” He came in to see. That means to inspect his guests. Spiritually we can say that God looks at the heart. He judges it. When? At the moment of death. Then all have to appear before Him. Then He will inspect if all is right. But who did this king see? All the guests? Maybe, but that is not what we find in our text.

His eyes are drawn to “a man.” A normal human being. A person. Notice that other guests had not seen any difference. Judas had also partaken of the Lord’s Supper but the disciples did not know he was a hypocrite. It is true that other guests were also humans. But now the eyes of the king are focussed on one specific guest. What is the issue? We read, he is a man “which had not a wedding garment.” Was it not provided to him? Then we understand. No, it surely was. Others had it. But this man refused. He had no wedding garment on. This was highly offensive. He showed disrespect for the king. He sat there in his ordinary dress. The retained his garment that he wore on the road. But what is the spiritual issue that Jesus points out? Self-righteousness. The person without garment does not want Christ’s righteousness. It is a picture of the hypocrite. Maybe this man thought that he could sit there. Maybe he thought of the invitation. But he lacked what was necessary.

Application

Congregation, when did this man realize that it was wrong? Yes, when the king came in. He thought that everything was right. He thought that he could come with his own garment. Maybe he even enjoyed the feast. Maybe he had talked to others about the marriage, the son, and the king. But what did he forget? That he rejected the wedding garment. Yes, the garment that was offered to him.

Partaker of the Lord’s Supper, should you not examine yourself beforehand? This man sat at the table but did not belong there. Maybe you have partaken every time. Maybe you think that all is right. Maybe you even had some enjoyment, emotion, and tears. But it can be wrong. You can deceive yourself. You can sit there in your own dress of self-righteousness, works, and, self-made faith. Maybe you even think, “I was invited.” And then still be a hypocrite. What a solemn thought! What if you have to appear before the judgment-seat of God? What if God would examine you? Would you be able to stand?

True child of God, these questions are not mean to increase fear in the life of the true believer. They ought to sit at the table. But it is good to ask yourself, why do I partake of the Lord’s Supper? Let’s return to our parable. What will happen Will the king simply disregard the situation? No! He begins to ask questions to this man.

The Question

What does the king say? We read in verse 12, “And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.” The king begins with, “friend, how camest thou in.” No, spiritually, God is not able to say that to a sinner. He is at enmity. But it is like Christ said to Judas, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50). The question in our text is as it were, how did you come in? How did you enter? Was it not through the door? Or did you climb in by the wall? Why those questions? Well, how did this man come in? We read, “not having a wedding garment.” The question is as it were, Friend, how do you think that you can meet me? How can you think to sit here in your own clothing? In a spiritual way, the hypocrite can think, I can appear before God with my own works and my own conversion. But that will not help. What happens to the man when the king asks this question? “He was speechless.” Literally it says, he was muzzled. Put to silence. It was like an animal in the Old Testament. Muzzled. Maybe this man had spoken with others before. Maybe he had some happiness. Maybe he had even a ‘good’ spiritual conversation. But now in one moment he is silenced. He has no answer. No, he did not tell why he did not have it. He did not explain why he did not want one. He was totally silent. The same is true when Christ asks the hypocrite questions in the day of judgment. Then there will be no answer. That will be something for the hypocrite?

Application

Let us draw some lines to the Lord’s Supper. Next week, when we partake or remain seated, can we appear with that before God? May we ask you a question, how did you come in? Did you come in by the door Christ or did you climb in over the wall? Maybe you think that you can partake. You believe in Christ. You have experienced some sin. But is that truly the case? What if it is not right? Now you can defend your ‘conversion.’ But will that be the case when the King inspects? May we tell you, if that moment is there, and it is not right? What will happen? Will you not be speechless? Then you have no answer. It will be forever too late. Partaker of the Lord’s Supper. Examine your heart. Read the passages that show the marks of grace (Matt. 5, Gal. 5). Study the Psalms and lay your heart next to it. Do you know of such experiences?

Doubting souls in our midst, do we say these things to scare you? Ah, no. But may we say this to you, those that need to fear often do not fear, and those that need not fear often do. Why is that? Because God’s true people examine

themselves time and again. They see so many sins, lacks, and wrongs. They acknowledge that they have so much weakness in their faith. And then they fear, is it truly from God? May we then ask you, who is Christ for you? Is He precious? Can you not be without Him? Do you need Him as the only covering for your sin? That is a good sign. Such that know their sins and long for Christ are welcome next week at the Lord’s Supper. Why? Because they confess that they lie in the midst of death. They seek their salvation outside themselves in Jesus Christ. When we look to the parable, will the king allow the man without garment to remain seated? Will he overlook it? No. This man will know the consequences.

The Consequence

The consequence is found in the verses 13 and 14, “Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.” Now the king commands his servants. These are attendants that serve the table. What does he command? “Bind him hand and foot and take him away.” This man is tied with chains. He can no longer move. He can not fight back. No, we do not read that the man ran away. He is speechless. And now he is taken away. But where do the servants bring him? We read, “Cast him into outer darkness.” That means, expel him to that pitch dark place. Note that only Matthew uses the term “outer darkness.” What kind of place is this? It is a place of pain, death, and separation of God. It is a place of which we read, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” No, those that are there will not be silent. They will lament. They will cry out: Why? Why? That will be a horrible place. A place of utter despair. Why did this man not examine himself? Why was he so foolish?

And what is now the summary of or key to this parable? Christ says, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” That means, many have been invited. Many have heard the gospel. Oh, yes, a number of those invited will come. Some in truth but others in their own ‘garment.’ What does then lack with the latter? The application of the Holy Spirit. Their heart rejected Christ. And sadly, it was their own desire. Yes, ultimately, it was because they were not elected. But it remains their own guilt.

Application

Congregation, do we see the solemnity of partaking at the Lord’s Supper? Yes, hypocrites will be cast forever into outer darkness. They will always weep. And even more, they will regret that they sat at the Lord’s Table. Not discerning the body of Christ. Why? Because they rejected Christ. They had still something for salvation in themselves. But true child of God, you may come, ah, yes, you must come. Why? To show the death of Christ. He for me, where I would have died that eternal death.

Congregation, do we see the reality? Many are called in the church. Many might partake of the Lord’s Supper. But relatively few are chosen. Only few are true partakers.

Unconverted friend, the picture that the parable shows you is not only of the Lord’s Supper. No. It is also a picture of the end of days. You will be bound, taken, and cast into that lake of fire. No, then you cannot blame God. Then you cannot say, few were chosen and that is why I am not saved. No, the gospel offer has gone out. But you rejected it. Why was this man ultimately cast out? Was it because he had no invitation? No, but he had no garment. That is the reason. We urge you one more time, friend, you are called to come to Jesus Christ with all your guilt and sin. Yes, you must come. If you reject Him then you enter into that reality that we have described.

Conclusion

Next week the Lord’s Supper will happen in your midst. How do you prepare? There are few things you need to do. First, examine if you have that wedding garment. That means examine if you truly belong to Christ. If that is not the case, we urge you to obtain it. There is still time to obtain grace. You are still in the land of the living. Second, search your heart for the reason to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Is it because of the Lord’s invitation alone? If that is not the case, ask the Lord to give it. Third, child of the Lord, ask yourself, how do I come to the table? Is that to show that I am a believer? That is not right. Or do you want to show thereby that you lie in the midst of death? Do you desire to show the death of the Savior? That is the right manner to sit at the table. Ask therefore that the LORD may prepare your heart truly. Then you will receive a blessing too. Congregation, there is much homework to do. Both for converted and unconverted. May the LORD bless the Lord’s Supper next week. If you sit there in truth, then it can become a foretaste of heaven. Amen.