

Pentecost 17, 2011A
566 "By Grace I'm Saved"
*567 "Not What These Hands Have Done"
917 "Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise"

"Many Are Called, Few are Chosen"

¹Again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴Again 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.'⁵But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.'¹⁰And 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.

¹¹"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³Then 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.'¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Heaven – God's kingdom of grace (compared to a wedding feast)

The Second Petition: Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Hosea 2:19-20 I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD

THOSE INVITED REFUSED TO COME-OTHERS WERE SENT, BUT THEY ALSO REFUSED (ISRAEL/JEWS, CHIEF PRIESTS & PHARISEES) [THEY REFUSED THE WORD]

He who rejects the Gospel and mistreats the Lord's messengers makes himself unworthy of everlasting life. But he is not worthy by meritorious works by the grace of God in Christ. The worthy person believes only in the grace of God in the Gospel message. (Bul's Notes)

John 5:39-40 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Matthew 6:19-21 19 " Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 23:37 " O **Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!

Ezekiel 18:23 "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "*and* not that he should **turn from** his ways and live?"

Ezekiel 33:11 "Say to them: '*As* I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked **turn from** his way and live. **Turn, turn from** your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

THOSE INVITED WERE NOT WORTHY (οἱ δὲ κεκλημένοι οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι)

Worthiness -- faith or unbelief:

Who receives this sacrament worthily? But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.

THE KING INVITED AS MANY AS THEY FOUND (GENTILES)

1 Timothy 2:4 (God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

THE MAN WITHOUT THE WEDDING GARMENT

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the **robe of righteousness**, As a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments, And as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels.

Revelation 7:13-14 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"In the parable the robe was a gift from the king. What is the robe which admits us into heaven? No true Christian would say that it is of his own making. It's as we sing in a hymn: "Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before His throne." All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But Christ is our garment of righteousness. Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Isaiah 61:10." (Buls)

MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN (πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν κλητοὶ, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί.)

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

³⁴ The reason why “many are called and few are chosen” is not that in his call, which takes place through the Word, God intended to say: “Externally I do indeed through the Word call all of you, to whom I give my Word, into my kingdom, but down in my heart I am not thinking of all, but only of a certain few. For it is my will that the majority of those whom I call through the Word are not to be illuminated or converted, but are to be and remain under condemnation, although I speak differently in my call to them.” ³⁵ In this way it would be taught that God, who is the eternal Truth, contradicts himself. Yet God himself punishes men for such wickedness when they say one thing and think and intend something different in their hearts (Ps. 5:10, 11; 12:3, 4). ³⁶ This would also completely undermine and totally destroy for us the necessary and comforting foundation, which daily reminds and admonishes us to learn and to determine God’s will toward us and what assures and promises it to us solely from his Word, through which he deals with us and calls us, so that we should believe it with absolute certainty and not doubt it in the least.

³⁷ For this reason Christ has the promises of the Gospel offered not only in general but also through the sacraments, which he has attached as a seal of the promise and by which he confirms it to every believer individually. ³⁸ For that reason also, as the Augsburg Confession states in Article XI, we retain individual absolution and teach that it is God’s command that we “believe this absolution and firmly hold that when we believe the word of absolution we are as truly reconciled with God as if we had heard a voice from heaven,” as the Apology explains this article. We would be deprived of this comfort completely if we could not determine God’s will toward us from the call which comes to us through the Word and through the sacraments. ³⁹ This would also overturn and destroy for us the foundation, namely, that the Holy Spirit wills to be certainly present with and efficacious and active through the Word when it is proclaimed, heard, and meditated upon. Hence, as was mentioned before, there is no basis for the assumption that those might be the elect who despise God’s Word and who reject, blaspheme, and persecute it (Matt. 22:5, 6; Acts 13:40f., 46), or who harden their hearts when they hear it (Heb. 4:2, 7), resist the Holy Spirit (^{tr-1077} Acts 7:51), remain in sin without repentance (Luke 14:18, 24), do not truly believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), make only an outward pretense (Matt. 7:15; 22:12), or seek other ways to righteousness and salvation outside of Christ (Rom. 9:31). ⁴⁰ On the contrary, as God has ordained in his counsel that the Holy Spirit would call, enlighten, and convert the elect through the Word and that he would justify and save all who accept Christ through true faith, so he has also ordained in his counsel that he would harden, reject, and condemn all who, when they are called through the Word, spurn the Word and persistently resist the Holy Spirit who wants to work efficaciously in them through the Word. ⁴¹ In this sense “many are called, but few are chosen,” for few accept the Word and obey it; the majority despise the Word and refuse to come to the wedding. The reason for such contempt of the Word is not God’s foreknowledge but man’s own perverse will, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Spirit which God offers to him through the call and resists the Holy Spirit who wills to be efficaciously active through the Word, as Christ says, “How often would I have gathered you together and you would not!” (Matt. 23:37).

Summary (Kretzmann)

The lesson of this parable is similar to that of the previous one, and was probably understood by the Jews in its first part. In the second part it went beyond the Jewish Church and contains a warning for all time. God Himself is the king. The wedding-feast is that of the Messiah’s kingdom, the marriage of the Lamb. The first invitation was issued to the chosen people of the Old Testament, the nation of the Jews. The prophets came to them in increasing numbers, with increasing clearness of message. Then came John the Baptist, Christ Himself, the apostles, with their urgent call to repentance and salvation. But the answer was indifference, hatred, blasphemy, murder. Then God’s patience was exhausted, then His judgment was executed upon Jerusalem and upon the Jewish nation, the Romans under Vespasian and Titus laying siege to their capital and destroying both Temple and city, 70 A. D. Since that time the Lord has faithfully attempted to get other guests for His wedding-feast. His messengers have gone forth on the highways and byways of the Gentile nations throughout the world. The Christian Church has spread to practically every country of the earth. Men of every tongue have been assembled in the great hall of the Lamb’s wedding-feast. Good and bad, hypocrites and sincere believers, are joined in the outward communion known as the visible Church. But the time of the King’s reckoning is coming. He has provided, through His Son Jesus Christ, a wedding-garment of spotless righteousness and purity for every sinner that is called to the feast. His mercy and grace are indeed free for all men, but they cannot partake of the meal without having first accepted this festal garment to cover the filth and nakedness of their sin. He will lay bare the deceit, if not before, then on the great Day of Judgment. And the insult to the love of God will be properly punished when every person that puts his trust in his own merit and works will be cast into the dungeon of hell with its everlasting torments. *“That will be the punishment that the time of visitation has not been recognized nor accepted, that we were invited, had Sacrament, Baptism, Gospel, absolution, and still did not believe it, nor made ourselves of use. Would to God that the dear Lord would teach us thoroughly and bring us to that point that we would realize what great mercy we have received in being invited to such a blessed feast, where we shall find salvation from sin, devil, death, and eternal wailing! He that will not accept this with thanks, but despises such grace, shall have eternal death instead of it. For one of the two it must be: Either receive the Gospel and believe and be saved, or do not believe and be condemned eternally.”* (Luther)

THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL¹

"From the verse: Many are called, but few are chosen, many meddling heads draw various thoughts that are neither fitting nor divine, following this line of thought: He whom God has chosen will be saved without means; and again, he whom He has not chosen may do whatever he will, be as pious and believing as he will, still it is ordained unto him that he must fall and cannot be saved; therefore I shall let it go as it will. If I should be saved, it will be without my interference; if not, all that I do and attempt is futile. What manner of untoward, secure people grow out of such impious thoughts every one can figure out for himself. Now, on the day of the Magi [Epiphany], when we spoke of the verse of the Prophet Micah, it was sufficiently shown that such thoughts are to be shunned as the devil himself, and a different form to study and think about God's will be chosen; that is, we should not bother God in His glory and in His election (*Versehung*), for there He is incomprehensible. And it is impossible that a person should not be offended by such thoughts, and either fall into despair, or else become absolutely godless and bold.

"But whosoever wants to know God and His will correctly, should go the right way, by which he will not be offended, but improved. The right way is Christ the Lord, when He says: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' Whoever, then, wants to know the Father correctly and come to Him, let him come to Christ first, and learn to know Him, namely, thus: Christ is the Son of God and almighty, eternal God. But what does the Son of God do? He becomes man for our sake, He becomes subject to the Law, in order to redeem us from the Law, He permits Himself to be crucified and dies on the cross, in order to pay for our sins; and He arises from the dead, in order to make, by His resurrection, an entrance into eternal life, and bring help against eternal death; and He sits at the right hand of God, in order to be advocate for us and to give us the Holy Ghost, by whom we may be ruled and led and kept against every temptation and suggestion of the devil. That means to know Christ rightly. When, then, this knowledge is good and firm in the heart, then begin and ascend into heaven and figure it out thus: Since the Son of God has done this for the sake of men, what follows with regard to the heart of God in its attitude toward us men, since His Son does this out of the Father's will and command? Surely thy own reason must force thee to say: Since God has given His only-begotten Son for our sake, and for our sake has not spared Him, He surely can have no evil designs toward us. It is not His will that we should be lost, since He seeks and uses the supreme means to help us to life. In this way we may come to God in the right manner, as Christ Himself preaches, John 3, 16: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Just hold these thoughts against the others that grow out of the other opinion, and ye will find that the other thoughts are those of the unpleasant devil, by which a man must become offended, and either despair or become bold and godless, since he can expect nothing good from God, "Some draw other thoughts for themselves, and explain the words thus: Many are called, that is, God offers His grace to many; but few are chosen, that is, He imparts this grace to few, for only a few are saved. That is altogether a wicked understanding, for how can it be possible, if a person thinks and believes thus of God, that he will not become God's enemy, since the absence of His will is the cause that we are not all saved? But just hold this opinion against the other which is found where people learn to know Christ the Lord first, and it will be found that such are all devilish blasphemies. Therefore there is an entirely different meaning in this verse: Many are called, etc. For the preaching of the Gospel is general and public for all that want to hear and accept it; and for that reason God has the Gospel preached so generally and publicly that every one should hear, believe, and accept it, and thus be saved. But how do things go? As it follows in the Gospel: Few are chosen, that is, few assume such an attitude toward the Gospel that God is favorably inclined toward them. For some hear it, and pay no attention; others hear it and do not cling firmly to it, also do not want to make sacrifices or suffer for it; some hear it, but prefer money and goods and worldly lust. But that is not pleasing to God, and He does not want such people. That is what Christ calls 'not being chosen,' that is, not to behave so that God can be well pleased with them. But those are chosen people and well-pleasing to God that hear the Gospel diligently, believe in Christ, manifest their faith in good works, and suffer on that account what they must suffer.

"This understanding is the right understanding that can offend no one, but improves the people that they think: Well and good, since I should be well-pleasing to God and chosen of Him, it will not be the proper thing for me to live with a bad conscience, to sin against God's commandment, and not hinder sin; but I must go to the preaching of the Word, pray God for His Holy Ghost, not permit the Word to leave the heart, defend myself against the devil and his suggestions, and pray for protection, patience, and assistance; then the result is splendid Christians. On the other hand, those that believe God to grudge salvation to some people, either become desperate or secure and godless, live like the beasts and think: It is all ordained whether I shall become saved or not; why should I hurt myself? No, not thus; thou hast the command, thou shalt hear the Word of God and believe, in Christ that He is thy Savior and has paid for thy sins. Remember this command, to follow it. If thou find thyself without faith, or weak, pray God for His Holy Ghost and do not doubt Christ is thy Savior, and thou shalt be saved through Him if thou believe on Him, that is, if thou take comfort in Him. May our dear Lord Jesus Christ grant this to us all! Amen." 164)

¹ http://www.kretzmannproject.org/MAT/call_of_the_gospel.htm