

Willow River Parish

Title: Responsible Grace

Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:1-14 (NRSV)

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Good morning Church! Today Jesus teaches people about the kingdom of heaven as a parable. He said, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.”

(2) Marriage is one of the biggest events in a person’s life. When people have a wedding, they invite not only their families, but also their relatives and friends. A wedding is the most precious day of their lives. Ordinary people also receive many congratulations, so what about the prince’s wedding in Jesus’ parable? The king would also have planned many good things for his son’s wedding and invited his important people.

The king sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but contrary to his expectations, they would not come. (3) Their reaction to the wedding invitation is confusing because it is different from our usual common sense and expectations. Again he sent other slaves, saying, “Tell those who have been invited: I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.” (4) However, they attach little importance to it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business. (5) Likewise, some of them ignored the invitation of their king and did not respond and made light of it. Despite the invitation of their king, they refused the invitation and did what they usually do instead of accepting it. In fact, because the host of the banquet is their king, they had to go to the wedding banquet unconditionally. But verse 6 describes their actions that it is hard for us to understand in our common sense. Not only do they ignore their king’s invitation, but they also seize, mistreat, and kill the king’s slaves who came to deliver the invitation. (6) In other words, they rebelled against their king. The king expected them to respond goodheartedly as he treated them well. However, they had their own way. They ignored their king, and even expressed their hostility against the king. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those

murderers, and burned their city. (7)

This tragic story is a parable. The king means God, and the son means Jesus Christ, and the people invited to the wedding party mean the Jewish who were proud of themselves as chosen people. The Jewish people boasted that they are the people of the kingdom of God. The first slaves sent by the king mean the law of Moses. The Israelites received the law of Moses but were unfaithful to the law. They even rejected their duty to obey the law, and later worshipped all kinds of idols, such as their golden calf. When the king sent the second slaves, they were arrogant and did not even look up. When Jesus Christ, Son of God, came to the world, the Jews were the greatest opponents. They even mistreated Jesus and killed him on the cross.

The parable of the king who gave a wedding banquet for his son is the message about the salvation of God. The arrogance of the Jews who refused the invitation of God have historically paid the price. Israel was invaded by the Roman empire, the temple was destroyed, many people were killed, and they were kicked out of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The parable became a historical fact.

Why did they refuse the invitation of the king? They did not realize the most urgent and important thing was the king's invitation not their daily routine. So, they went to care for their farms and their businesses, and they missed the important invitation. Like this, if we only care for the needs of the world, we may miss the important invitation too. The Israelites rejected God's law and Jesus Christ and served idols, and they blocked the way of Messiah and executed him on the cross. In other words, they abandoned the first duty about the law of Moses and the second duty about love. How foolish is it to abandon the way of God's salvation by being busy serving idols?

The wedding for his son was ready, but there were empty seats in the banquet because invitees did not come. (8) So, the king sent his slaves

to the main streets, and ordered them to invite everyone they found to the banquet. (9) In Luke 14:13 (NRSV), Jesus said “when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” The slaves invited the poor, the disabled, the marginalized, the blind, the children, the prostitute, the elderly, foreigners, tax collectors, and everyone they found to the banquet. Jesus loves everyone and cares for the marginalized. God’s love is unconditional. He loves us with that love. Our Lord says that those who love the marginalized and the poor are blessed because our God will repay those who give love. The invitation to the banquet given to everyone is the grace of God.

Everyone participated in the wedding feast, but only one person was an exception. He was a person who participated without wearing a wedding robe. The king said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe? And he was speechless.” (12) Judging from the fact that everyone except him participated in the party wearing robes, it seems that the robes were something anyone could get if they wanted to. What does that mean for a man who participated without wearing a wedding robe.

The wedding robe is a metaphorical expression. There is a proverb: “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Those who are invited to the banquet must follow the law of the king. Those who have experienced the grace of Christ should have different lives before and after the experience. Sinners can be invited to the banquet, but they must take off their sinner’s clothes and wear the clothes God has given. That is our story. As we receive God’s Grace, we must take off our sinner’s clothes and wear the clothes He has given. We must not remain in the position of sinners. We must not stay in the position of sinners. We must wear God’s clothes and therefore our lives must be changed and transformed after we experience the love of God.

The invitation to the kingdom of heaven is an opportunity for a new

life opened by God's grace. The door is wide open to gentile and sinners. Invited people need a reasonable obligation to live up to the gift of grace. Everyone received God's invitation to enter the kingdom. We received God's invitation to enter heaven. And, now if we have entered the way of salvation, we must live a life worthy of grace. If we live as sinners, even though we have entered the way of salvation, the invitation will be cancelled. To wear wedding robes is to take off our old clothes and wear new ones in Christ. In other words, it means we wear the robes of repentance, the robes of humility and love, the robes of rebirth, and the robes of service.

We were all invited to participate in the joy of God's kingdom. Therefore, we must wear robes of repentance, of faith, and of rebirth. It is our duty to do no harm to others, to do good, and to stay in love with Christ. We are blessed by God. Heaven is the gift of the Lord that we can experience from the moment we live. For those who want to live a life worthy of the truth of the gospel, the kingdom of God is already deep in their lives. I hope we live that kind of life. May we live in the name of Christ every day, inviting the Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds. Amen.