



20th Sunday after Pentecost

11th October 2026



Have you accepted the invitation?

Today's Gospel reading is an interesting one. The story of the declined invitations to the royal marriage feast appears in a significantly different form in Luke's Gospel. Luke has a more gentle approach. It shows the way that other things, perhaps secular things interfere with our commitment to Jesus.

However, Matthew's reading is very direct and describes the wedding guest without the robe that is ejected out into the street, with much weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And we wonder how that relates to the kingdom of God where all are welcome at the table.

So Matthew allegorises this story in the direction of the Christian story of salvation and it becomes devoid of all realism.

I had to check on the word allegory for myself just to be sure that I had the right meaning in my head!! It's a story or picture that uses symbols to convey a hidden or ulterior meaning, typically a moral or political one.

So there we are. Much the same as last week; the landowner represented God, who lovingly establishes and protects creation and his people, the Vineyard represents Israel the nation entrusted with God's covenant and blessings. The tenant farmers represent the chief priest, elders and Pharisees who were supposed to be leading the people in obeying God. And so it goes on with the son and heir representing Jesus.

In our reading today the king represents God, the son Jesus, and the wedding banquet the time of divine-human celebration symbolised by the kingdom.

In the social world of Jesus' day it was not uncommon for invitations to be sent out in two stages, the first was like a "save the date" invitation, when the event was some time away. Then just before, the second invitation was sent to convey the message that all was ready.

We assume here that the first message has been sent and those invited would represent Israel, those sent to issue the reminder in the first instance would be the OT prophets. Those sent following the first rejection would be the Christian missionaries devoting their efforts to Israel.

The message they convey is that everything is ready, this reflects the sense of the messianic era having arrived with the ministry of Jesus. The note of unreality enters with what happened next, the mistreatment of these emissaries and the king's violent response alludes to the mistreatment of the Christian missionaries and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

The story resumes with the final invitation, this time going into the streets to invite everyone, bad and good alike into the wedding hall for the banquet. At this time it is indicated that the mission of the church is to reach beyond Israel to the nations of the world.

Now we move to the most disturbing part of the King/s reaction to the man without the wedding robe. We hear that all are invited to the banquet, God's banquet, the good and the bad, what we have here is an illustration with the allegory, (the symbols used to illustrate a hidden meaning), an important truth for the Christian community.

The community of the kingdom is a mixed bag and will continue until the judgement.

The man without the wedding garment represents all those who accepted the invitation, but within that calling did not undergo the conversion of life required for entrance into the final kingdom.

So we see at the final judgement the wedding guest without the wedding robe, without the total commitment to Jesus, they will be found lacking and suffer the exclusion that we see at the end of the story.

This allegorical parable takes a sweep across salvation history, it goes beyond the "no" of Israel to the Gospels and challenges members of the church not to be complacent about the inheritance of the kingdom.

Many, meaning all, are called to the banquet of the kingdom but few, not all, are chosen or destined to enter. A total commitment and change in our lives, a rebirth, must be undertaken to ensure entry into the final kingdom.

I found this interpretation very interesting, I had not looked at this parable in this light, or this depth before.

As I was doing some research, I found this information in Brendan Byrne's, *Lifting the Burden*, a Gospel commentary for our church today. I sometimes think the people of Jesus' day would have had difficulty as well.

So, in summary; Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a king throwing a wedding celebration for his son.

The king represents God the Father, and the son represents Jesus.

The invited guests who refused to come, represent the religious leaders of Israel who rejected God's prophets and their message.

When the original guests refused, the invitation goes out to everyone on the main roads both bad and good, symbolising the open offer of the gospel to all people, including Gentiles.

The guest without proper attire who gets thrown out represents someone who tries to enter God's kingdom on their own terms rather than accepting God's provided righteousness and transformation.

The closing verse, many are called, few are chosen, means that while God's invitation is massive and universal, only those who truly respond with a changed life and acceptance of His Grace are genuine participants.

This leads us, I feel, to a time of personal reflection, a time to take a radical look at our Christian Faith journey, and as an individual, consider how we have been changed.

How we have been transformed by God, and how we depend on God and his amazing grace as we follow Jesus' example and live out our Christian faith in our community.

I encourage you to take the time to make this personal reflection. None of us, me included, nobody, is excluded from this judgement, and the last thing we want is to be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Amen