Matthew 22:1-10 (5) Come to the wedding banquet!

 We are actually going to start this sermon by talking about the last few verses of our Gospel reading that I am not going to make the heart of my sermon. I am speaking of the verses that address the situation of the man at the wedding banquet who did not have the wedding clothes on. I believe that those words contain a simple message that we need to briefly contemplate.

 The first thing to contemplate is how this guy got in without the wedding clothes? We are not told how but clearly the man’s presence and his lack of wedding clothes was an offense to the couple and the King. Here’s a thought. It is not a situation of sneaking or bribery because how can you sneak in to a wedding where everyone off of the street corners and byways has now been invited and I don’t think bribery because that would be questioning the integrity of the servants of the king and there is no call for that. So deeper thinking is required.

 The custom of the time was that “wedding clothes” were provided for the guests that all the guests look the same and no one would stand out. It would be the bride and groom who were the standouts in their special and fancy wedding clothing. The wedding clothes of the guests would be a type of outer robe the guest was to wear, again so that all the guests blended in and the wedding couple stood out. For this guest not to have a wedding garment on means that initially he took the garment and then disposed of it because he did not feel the garment good enough for himself. I do not think he refused the garment initially because doing so would have meant the servants would not allow him in. So again, it is my opinion that he took the garment and then disposed of it once in.

 Why is this important? Consider that the wedding garment represents the “robe of Christ righteousness.” You are at the wedding, in the crowd celebrating at this banquet because of the King’s favor and goodness. Yet somewhere along the line this man decided that what the King was about, what the king provided was not good enough for him. He cast off the wedding garment. That explains why he can’t give the king an answer. How do you, when confronted by the King say to the King, “Well, your Majesty, I just thought your clothes were garbage and that what I had on was better!” When confronted by the King you realize just how foolish your thinking and attitude are and at least you grasp it is better to keep your mouth shut at this point.

 My dear People, this guy represents any person who has decided that they don’t need Jesus the Christ and his garment of righteousness. They have decided that they are worthy and that what the King offers is not good enough, sufficient enough or worthy of their high and self-exalted status. A great reminder to any human to never determine that you are greater, smarter, wiser or better than the King and what He has provided. In truth, you are really no better than the others that the King has already dealt with. Now let’s jump in and consider the rest of this parable under the theme: **“COME TO THE WEDDING BANQUET!”**

 I don’t think there is anyone here who does not grasp the very pointed message that this parable is pointing to. Remember, parables are earthly stories with spiritual meanings. In this case, is there anyone here who doesn’t grasp that the King is the Almighty Father of heaven and earth? That the Son the wedding banquet is being held for is none other than Jesus Christ the Son of God and thus the very picture of eternal life and salvation that God has prepared for his guests. In other words this parable is about eternal life and salvation. Eternal life and salvation provided by the Father, fulfilled in the Son and granted to us by the very grace and compassion of a merciful and loving God. There is no other way to grasp this and it is in grasping this base fact of the parable that the true nature and horror of what the invited guests did comes out.

 Here is the context of this parable. Jesus speaks these words to people and the Jewish leadership gathered around him on Tuesday of Holy Week. This whole discourse found for us at the beginning at chapter 21 was started by the Triumphal entry of Jesus into the Temple on Sunday, followed on Monday by the fact that Jesus once again cleansed the temple of the money changers and those conducting businesses in the courtyards. And don’t forget that later on, on Monday, Jesus is going to cause the fig tree to whither because it has no fruit on it. It is Tuesday morning and now the opportunity is found for the Jewish religious leadership to confront Jesus. **“By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority?”**

 Those are wide reaching questions. If Jesus had done nothing more for the past 3 years but do some teaching and gather some disciples these questions would not have been asked. But for the past three years Jesus has performed a multitude of miracles, seriously, Jesus has done by my best guess miracles that counted in the hundreds of thousands. I can also tell you that these men knew, because they had investigated Jesus, every aspect and fact of the life of Jesus. Yep, virgin birth, house of David, born in Bethlehem, singing angles, joyful shepherds, Magi visit, flight to Egypt, return to Nazareth and the visit of the 12 year old Jesus to the Temple. They know who Jesus is. They suspect who Jesus is. But they don’t want to acknowledge that and they don’t want people believing that because they grasp that to allow such means the end of your way of life, the end of your self-exalted religious importance…not to mention your wealth and status as “leaders” of God’s people. It is to them that Jesus speaks these words of this parable to tries and wake you up from the spiritual death your soul has undergone.

 You are the invited guests of the King! Let that sink in. The King has a son and the King has prepared a wedding banquet. Properly the King has extended invitations, sent out way early so you could get ready and be a part of the celebration. What an honor! Invited to the Royal wedding! Considered worthy by the King to be a part of his joy and his celebration of family and love. Surely you would mark this date! It is the party of the year. Everyone who is anyone will be there and the King has invited you!

 And then the wedding day arrives. The hour comes for the guest to begin arriving. No one is there! The King, in total graciousness, willing to overlook this act of disregard, sends out his servants to remind those invited and to get them moving that they might come and be a part. One little sentences sums up the problem. **“But they did not want to come.”** What? This is the King! This is His party, his family, his son, his willingness to share his life and bounty with you. And you don’t want to come? Have you no regard for the King? Are you passing judgment on the King? Are you sending the message that you don’t care for or like the King and what he is about? Why, why wouldn’t you want to come, except for your own foolishness and heart of evil?

 But note the King is still gracious. He must have suspected all of this, felt all of this horrid attitude of his invited guests. He does not give up. He sends more servants. The invitation is upbeat and suggests it is going to be an awesome event. **“Look, I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and my fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet!”** No threats. Excitement, allure, enticement for good and wonderful things! Clearly the King has gone all out. There will be no lack of anything for anyone at this feast. Come, come and be with the King!

 But again, the stark words of what happens sounds forth. **“But those who were invited paid no attention and went off, one to his own farm, another to his business. The rest seized the king’s servants, mistreated them, and killed them.”** Dear guests, your life, your wealth, your farm, your business, yes, everything about your life is because of the King and his governance. He rules for your good and your betterment. He has done all to make your life the best and blessed. And this is how you act? Your show contempt for the King. You show your lack of honor and respect as you beat and kill his servants! Have you no grasp of the foolishness of what you have done? I take it then that you don’t think the King capable of rule or justice or even of having the ability to truly be the King. You will be wrong!

 Who blames the king for his anger or his actions? He has been despised, maligned, dishonored and disrespected in every way imaginable by these invited guests. The King is right in his actions! These words today serve for all in this world who have decided to treat the Lord God in this way. It matters not what your excuse is but only that you have dishonored and despised the true and only God. The God who in love sent his son to atone for your sins and grant you the status of being an invited guest. Please do not treat the wonder of God and Jesus in this way.

 The wonder of this parable is what follows. **“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9So go to the main crossroads and invite as many as you find to the wedding banquet.’ 10Those servants went out to the roads and gathered together everyone they found, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”** It is these words that lift my spirit and cause me to be filled with thanks to God.

 I am one who has come from the highways and byways of the world. I might have been a well-dressed traveler or perhaps a scheming thief along the road ready to rob you, for you see, the good and the bad are brought in. The King has extended his invitation to all. The King wants to share his banquet and the joy of his family with any and all who will come and be a part. It does not matter what you were as you were on that road. What matters is that you have heard the invitation. You have heard the call to come and be a part of the King’s life and banquet. You did not give excuse, you did not go about your business, and you did not abuse or misuse the messengers of the King! In shock, with awe and wonder, you believed the message. You heard the King wanted you to come and you simply went. And whether poor or rich, whether dusty or clean you found that the King had a garment just for you. You at that wedding, were on the same and equal footing with all who had gathered. You are a guest. You are a valued participant, a grateful soul who knows that the love of this King this day is yours!

 Dear people, I am guessing that you grasp the total wonder of what is being taught here. God in his grace and love wants all to come and be a part of his banquet, of his gift of eternal life and salvation with his Son. It is not God’s desire to hurt or harm, to suppress or brow beat, but it is his desire to share his goodness and love with those who would come. Yes, this parable is one that highlights and focuses on the goodness, love, compassion and grace of God for the souls of this world.

 Now if you want, you can do what the world does, you can focus on those who did not come and what happened to them. That is what the world does with the Lord. They see or hear about the righteous and just actions of the Lord and condemn that as horrid and totally unloving, never once giving thought to the wrong and evil actions of the invited who despised and hated the Lord. You can do that, but I will simply tell you that what you will have done is simply made yourself one of them. Filled with contempt and hatred for God and his graciousness and then sadly but truthfully, I will tell you what you can expect too! It won’t be good.

 Me, I will marvel at the goodness and grace of this King. I will be filled with awe and wonder that he has invited me to be a part of his banquet. It is clear that the King has provided and given all out of the goodness and love of his heart, and He has invited unworthy me. My heart is filled with joy and gladness because in truth, the actions of the King, his grace and love, has forever changed my life. I am grateful. I am humbled. Dear King, just let me be your guest and servant now and forever. Amen.