

The Lord Longs for Our ‘Yes’.

Text: Matt 22:1-10

Suggested Hymns:

597, 268, 320, 335, 304

1) God Keeps Inviting

2) The Meaning of Our ‘Yes’

3) God Finds “Worthy” Guests

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 22:1–10, ¹ *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:* ² *“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,* ³ *and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.*

⁴ *Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.” ’* ⁵ *But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.* ⁶ *And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.*

⁷ *But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.* ⁸ *Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.’* ⁹ *Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’* ¹⁰ *So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We so often forget. Even Christians live so much of life without remembering how much the heart of a loving God longs for His children.

We need to keep remembering that God is a personal being. When His children whom He has made by a special act of His creation are separated from

Him, His heart aches for their return. When His children for whom He has given His only begotten Son are separated from Him, His loving heart reaches out in longing for their return.

Sadly, we live too much of life forgetting that each sinful desire and action leads us away from God and constitutes a rejecting, separating act from God. It hurts Him very much.

Have you ever felt that you could justify a sinful desire or act by saying, “*It doesn’t hurt anybody?*” The “*somebody*” who gets hurt first and above all is our gracious and merciful God.

And as He gets hurt by our sins, He doesn’t have the expected human reaction. He doesn’t sit and pout. He doesn’t look at Himself and review all that He has done for us — and how we have spurned Him. He doesn’t just sit and feel sorry for Himself. His initial act is not one of revenge and of getting even.

Rather, *the Lord continually longs for our ‘Yes.’* This is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God Keeps Inviting

This is the great message of the parable that is before us today. The action of the king who gave a marriage feast for his son is meant to give us a picture of the action of our gracious God.

He does all the preparing. He bears all the cost. He takes all the initiative. He invites His children to the feast. He is set for a great celebration. The guest of honour is none other than His Son, Jesus Christ. Come to the banquet!

This is not a frivolous, trite, flippant invitation — but one that flows from immeasurable longing; one that flows from immeasurable preparation and cost to the host; one that has behind it the utmost desire for a ‘yes’ answer from the invited guests.

This longing, inviting, blessing activity of a gracious God among His people is really the meaning of the much used term found in the Bible, and also found in our text, “*the kingdom of heaven.*”

The Word of God in the parable today is to help us remember that it is all still going on. It is God confronting us again today with the gracious invitation and longing for our ‘yes’.

God has been at work among His people always for the purpose of enabling us finally to say ‘yes.’ His first promise of a Saviour to Adam and Eve¹ was given to them that they might say, “‘Yes,’ *the Lord is for us. We accept Him as our Saviour.*” The message recorded there is a part of the sacred record and its purpose is still to empower us to say ‘yes’ even today.

So also the promises of God to His people through the prophets were given to them to elicit from them a ‘yes.’ Every commitment of grace on the part of God to His people was also an invitation to them for their commitment to Him and a ‘yes’ to His plan of salvation.

The coming of Jesus with the glorious message surrounding His coming is an act of God which is meant to bring a ‘yes’ from His people. In love for His children and in response to His longing heart reaching out to enfold them God gave Jesus to be a Man, to suffer and to die the death of a criminal, to take on Him the sins of the world.

This event and this message is the foundation for the invitation. It is His “*preparation for the banquet.*” It sets forth in greatest clarity His self-sacrificing love, His earnest intent for His children. From this flows the invitation, “*Come to the marriage feast.*” Who can fathom the dimensions of God’s eagerness for our ‘yes’ in response?

Today this invitation is laid before us again with all its winsomeness and fervour. The longing heart of God is filled with desire for our acceptance of His love. His watchful eye is looking with expectancy only wanting to see our ‘yes’ response as we joyously run to accept His invitation and find our place at His table. Come, all is ready!

2. The Meaning of Our ‘Yes’

What does it mean to say ‘yes’ — to come? Under the picture of the banquet it means an abundance to satisfy our greatest longing. Surely its first and fullest meaning is that we enjoy a right relationship with our God.

All human beings have a basic twofold need. They need to be accepted and loved. They need to give acceptance and love.

These basics are not always recognised as needs in human beings, but they are there. Here we do not mean passionate love or romantic love. We mean the

love which is more basic and even more meaningful, the love which is a basic ingredient to life itself.

Every human being has an unquenchable appetite for this kind of acceptance, approval, and love. The banquet of the King is the place to go to taste it in its most delightful and satisfying abundance.

All real love and satisfying relationships have their roots in God's love for us. He started it all, while we were still His enemies. This fact is still inherent in our being as a hindrance to our acceptance and our 'yes.'

Can this invitation be real? Can God be serious in inviting us when way down deep we know we are His enemies? Is He forgetting that? Is this a superficial invitation just to pull us away from what we really want? Is He using the "*banquet*" picture just to cover His real intent of getting at us to pour out His wrath upon us who are His enemies?

A 'yes' answer to God's banquet invitation means a 'no' answer to these last three questions. A 'yes' means that I trust God. I believe His invitation, His banquet, and His relationship to me are real. I believe they are good. I believe that my 'yes' will rob me of nothing and give me all that He promises in the invitation and elsewhere.

But — the text tells us that the invited guests said 'no.' — Awful! How could they? What possible excuses could they have had? Didn't they hear? Didn't they understand the meaning, the depth, and the longing love of the invitation?

They made light of it. They flitted off to give themselves to their own enterprises and pursuits. The one went to his farm. Another went to his place of business. So what is the big deal about a banquet invitation? Who is going to tend to my business?

How sad! What blindness! To prepare the banquet, God's Son bled unto death. When God invites people to the banquet, His heart bleeds in sorrow and hurt as the invited guests say 'no.' — The one to his farm, the other to his business!

"What do I do now?" This must be the question of the longing heart of a gracious God. "I will try again" — and again — and again. "I will send my

servants to impress upon them the sincerity and the meaning of the invitation. Surely they will say ‘yes.’

⁶ *And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.* Do you remember the Word of God, “**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked?**” Our text continues, ⁷ *But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.* This was the king’s way of saying, “If you insist on giving ‘no’ as your answer so shall it be!” Now where were their farms and where were their businesses — and where were they?

They no longer needed to deal with the troublesome invitation, “**Come to the banquet.**” For them the invitation did finally stop coming. What an awful catastrophe! When a gracious, loving, merciful God deals with His people in justice rather than with a loving heart — where is there a greater, more awful calamity?

Surely the parable is spoken, recorded, and laid before us today in order that you and I may find our place in it. Walk through it slowly, with prayerful heart, and find your place.

If you identify with those who for any reason say ‘no’ to the invitation by all means ask God for His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness, now. For He says to us in John 6:37, ... *and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

In the hope of finding your place in the parable, you will surely find the invitation spoken by a gracious God in response to a longing, loving, heart. “**Come, for all things are now ready!**”² With His watchful eye He is still so very eager to detect even the slightest signal of your answer ‘yes’.

3. God Finds “Worthy” Guests

Our text says that *the wedding hall was filled with guests.* God’s gracious purposes are not frustrated. How was the hall filled? The king simply extended the invitation to others who, when they heard it - said ‘yes.’ Our text says that *those who were invited were not worthy.*

Worthiness was not some qualifying condition which they must fulfil. The invitation is not directed according to any condition of worthiness of the person other than the ‘yes’ response. There is no physical or social condition which

makes the guest worthy. There is no qualifying factor that has to do with being male or female, or age or nationality or social status or any such factor. The ready 'yes' answer is the "worthiness" of which the text speaks.

There is no spiritual qualifying condition to constitute worthiness except the ability to give a sincere 'yes' answer to the invitation extended. The servants of the king "*went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good.*"

The Gospel is for all people. The servants very likely found derelicts and mischievous, young and old, those who lived in open sin and wickedness, those who sinned "under cover" and on the sly, those who tried to live the good life and those who didn't even try. They found the good and the bad. The invitation went to all. On the basis of inherent personal readiness, the last were as unworthy as were the first.

There was only one difference. This was that the hall was filled with those who said 'yes' and came. The unworthy said 'no' and went elsewhere.

Every sinner who receives this invitation in penitent faith must confess together with Martin Luther, "*I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.*"

With the loving invitation to come to the marriage feast comes also the power to say 'yes.' The invitation is heard again today with all its winsomeness and clarity with God's eager desire for your 'yes.'

Some Christians may almost feel insulted by the invitation. They may feel as though they have already said 'yes' and are even now feasting at the table.

If you are among these, you will also understand the joy of saying 'yes' again and again. You will also delight in hearing the invitation again and again. For we daily sin much and indeed deserve God's wrath and punishment. Every sin is a "departure move," a "no" gesture. Oh, how we regret these today. Oh, how delighted to hear again God's invitation for us to attend the marriage feast for His Son. Oh, how eager and quick to say 'yes' again today, lest He change His mind and withdraws the invitation.

For Christians who commit themselves to the Lord daily, God intends His invitation and our response to be an occasion for celebration. Surely this is also why He uses the picture of the marriage feast. He is the bridegroom. We, His church, are the bride. Under the picture of the bridegroom and the bride it should not be strange to hear the bridegroom say, “I love you — come!” Nor should it be strange for the bridegroom to expect the bride to respond, “‘Yes’, I love you too!” — and come.

May our answer to God’s invitation today and always be a joyous, grateful, praise-filled, ‘Yes.’ Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Gen. 3:15

² Luke 14:17