

Why Is It That Few Are Chosen?

Text: Matt 22:1-14

Suggested Hymns:

506, 303, 305, 286, 304

1) The Cause Is Not To Be Sought In God

2) The Cause Is To Be Sought In Man Only

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 22:1-14, 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.*

¹¹ *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (NKJV)*

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

Dear friends in Christ,

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” This is a sad truth, but a divine truth it is. Compared with the great mass of mankind, there are but few that constitute the number of the elect.

Great is the number of people who are called by the Gospel and to whom is offered the gift of free salvation, but few there are whom God has predestined before the foundation of the world was laid, that they should enter eternal life.

What is the cause of it? All the churches that have adopted the principles of Calvin say, *“God has foreordained the great mass, the majority, of mankind to eternal death; for those who are doomed Christ did not shed His blood; they are not effectually called by the Gospel; God does not want to save them; even if they appear to be true Christians, they are not such in the eyes of God; He passes by them, and His grace is not for them.”*

This is the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. What a cheerless and comfortless theory! Calvin himself admits that it is a *“horrible decree.”* Is there any foundation for such a theory and doctrine in the Scriptures? None whatever. God does not will the sinner’s death.

In the Old Testament He even attests this by a solemn oath, saying, *‘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.’¹*

And from our Gospel we learn that the cause and reason why only a few are chosen is not to be sought in God’s will, but elsewhere.

For the purpose, then, of becoming truly enlightened on this point let us, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, consider the question: *Why Is It That Few Are Chosen?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Cause Is Not To Be Sought In God

There is a predestination to glory. All who reach heaven were ordained to eternal life, and such predestination is a cause also of their salvation.

But there is no predestination to eternal woe and misery. Such a decree of God does not exist whereby He has ordained the greater part of mankind to eternal damnation. The true cause of why only a few are chosen is not to be sought in God. Our Gospel clearly shows that.

There are three points in our Gospel to show that the fault does not lie with God.

The first point is: God has from eternity loved all people and has redeemed them all through His beloved Son. We read, *The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son.*

Who is that king? and who is his son? The King is God the Father, and His Son is the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the marriage? It is the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, His coming into the flesh, His union with our human nature.

Now what is it that induced God to send His only-begotten Son into this world and to let Him become man, like us in every respect, with the exception of sin? It was His love to the human race. God loves all people without any distinction and without any exception. So we read in the Gospel according to St. John, *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*²

And what is the king’s message delivered by his messengers when the time of the marriage approached? He invites them and says, *“See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready.”* God had His Son perform the great work of redemption. When His beloved Son lived upon this earth, suffered, and died, and, dying, called from the cross, *“It is finished,”* then all the arrangements for the great feast were completed.

Thus, as Daniel the prophet says, *“... make reconciliation for iniquity, ... bring in everlasting righteousness, ... seal up vision and prophecy.”*³

But for whom does God intend the fruits of Christ’s great work? For whom did the Saviour live, and suffer, and die? Not for the elect only, but for all people. We read in 1 John 2:2, *“And He Himself (referring to Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

How, then, can the fault that only a few are chosen be attributed to God, to Him who loves all people and showed such love in sending His own Son into the world, and who, moreover, had His Son die for all and thus redeem them all with His own precious blood?

The second point in our Gospel to show that the cause and reason for the limited number of the chosen is not to be sought in God, is this God invites all people to partake of the feast of this marriage. He excludes no one. We read, [He] *sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding*. This was done in the time of the Old Testament. Then God had His chosen people Israel. These were the invited guests.

However, we must not think that God wanted to exclude from eternal salvation all the rest of mankind in the time of the Old Testament, and save none but the Israelites. Why did the Lord perform the greatest miracles in Israel? Why did He so wonderfully lead this people? Why did He finally establish them in the geographical centre of the then inhabited world and give them rulers and kings who made known the name of Jehovah in distant lands?

God did this, to urge even the most distant heathen to join His chosen people Israel and to seek salvation in their faith and religion. Come to the marriage, come, be saved through the promised Messiah — this was the universal call of God’s servants during all the time of the Old Testament, of Adam, of Methuselah (who lived almost to the Flood of Noah), of the patriarchs, of the prophets, until the time was fulfilled and the Saviour appeared.

Then, we are told, *“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.’”*

This was in the time of the New Testament. When Christ had come and wrought out for the fallen human race forgiveness of sins, grace, deliverance from death and hell, righteousness, life, heaven, and salvation, then “other servants” were sent forth to proclaim this to the invited guests, to the Jews.

There was John the Baptist, the seventy disciples, whom Christ sent forth to announce to the inhabitants of Judea that the kingdom of God is at hand, and the twelve apostles, who were sent on the same errand.

And when the invited guests refused to come, we are told that the king said to his servants, *“go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.”* From the Jews the apostles went to the Gentiles.

In the New Testament God did not single out a certain nation, as He did in the Old Testament, where the Israelites were His chosen people because His

beloved Son was to be of the seed of Abraham. In the New Testament the Lord God has the Gospel brought to every nation directly, not through the means and channel of a certain nation.

He has the Gospel proclaimed to every creature, and it is His will that all people should come to repentance and to the knowledge of the truth. How, then, can the fault be with God that but few are chosen, with God, who invites all people to come to the marriage of His Son and offers to all forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation?

God, however, does even more than that. Thirdly, we learn from our Gospel that no one is permitted to attend the feast without having on a wedding garment. The meaning is: no one can be saved without faith.

When God offers to man forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation in Christ Jesus, that offer and gift must be accepted by faith. Now it is true that by our own reason and strength we cannot believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to Him. But we are not expected to do that of ourselves.

In olden times it was customary, on festival occasions, to provide each guest with a special garment which he must wear at the feast. And so the Lord God provides us also with the means to accept His divine gifts, with faith. Faith is not man's work; it is God's work in man.

To all who hear the divine call is given the power to believe and thus to accept the divine gifts offered to them; and the word of God is powerful to produce true faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

How, then, can God be blamed that but few are chosen? God who does everything and all to save the whole fallen human race? God who provides man even with the last thing necessary that he might enjoy the fruits of his Saviour's merits and who kindles the flame of faith in man's heart?

2. The Cause Is To Be Sought In Man Only.

The true cause and reason why but few are chosen must, therefore, be sought elsewhere. And where do we find it? In man, and in man only.

According to our Gospel there are two classes of people who constitute the great mass of the damned, or of those who are not chosen, namely, those who reject the divine call, and those who accept it outwardly, but not sincerely.

What response did the invited guests make in the time of the Old Testament? We are told simply, ***“they were not willing to come.”*** That is, in short, the history of the majority of the Jews, and of nearly all the heathen before Christ.

Patriarchs, prophets, servants of the Lord by the thousands exhorted them, urged them, entreated them; but they would not come. They were indifferent and did not consider it worth while to listen to those entreaties.

And do we not find that same indifference around and about us to this day? Why do people not provide for their immortal souls? Is it because God has overlooked and neglected to call them?

No; every church building they pass is a call, every cross they see is a call, every word they read or hear with reference to the Gospel is a call. They are indifferent. They do not care for the great feast which God, in His boundless mercy, has prepared for them.

Or they are so much absorbed in the things of this life, in the pursuit of wealth, in earthly pleasures and honours, that they pay no attention whatever to God’s constant call and to the welfare of their immortal souls. They are like the inhabitants of Judea in Christ’s time, of whom our Gospel says, ***“⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.”***

Or they are outspoken enemies of the divine truth, denouncers of the Christian religion, blasphemers, and scoffers, who maliciously do all the harm they can and persecute the ministers of the Gospel. They are like the rest of the Jews, of whom our Gospel says, ***“⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.”***

Remember how, after putting Christ to death, the Jews persecuted the disciples of the Lord and shed the blood of all on whom they could lay their hands, their first victim being Stephen, being the first martyr. But ill, indeed, they fared at the hands of the avenging God. For ***“when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”***

Retribution came before they were aware of it. A Roman army surrounded the holy city of Jerusalem, slew thousands of Jews, and burned and laid waste the city and temple.

And thus, to this day, the Lord often avenges the blood of the persecuted and slain, by the most terrible judgements on the enemies of His truth who scornfully reject the Gospel call.

See, then, here we have the true cause and reason why so many are not chosen. They reject the Gospel call, being either careless and indifferent, or absorbed in the things of this world, or malicious and open enemies of God.

Moreover, there is another class of people who accept the call merely outwardly, but not sincerely. We read, 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.***

Note that the servants gathered together not the good only, but the bad also. There are some who accept the divine call and are gathered into the assembly of those who attend the feast of the Lamb; but they are bad, they are not converted, they remain in their sins, they are damnable hypocrites who profess the faith with their mouths, but deny the Lord in their hearts.

Whose fault is it that these are not among the chosen few though they are outwardly counted with them? It is their own fault. There is no sincerity with them, and they wilfully remain bad. Others who accept God's call merely outwardly, but not sincerely are self-righteous.

At the end of our Gospel we read, ¹¹ ***But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'***

We have heard that the wedding garment is faith. But how many are there among the would-be Christians who refuse to put on this wedding garment, which God proffers to them! They are self-righteous. They consider their own righteousness, which Isaiah the prophet calls filthy rags, a suitable garment in which to present themselves at the King's table. They cannot say in truth, *My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;*⁴ for they are too high-minded to admit that they are sinners, and that it takes the blood of the Son of God to cleanse them from their transgressions.

Whose fault is it that these are cast out into outer darkness on the great day of judgement, when the King comes to view His guests? Whose fault is it that they are not numbered with the chosen few?

It is entirely their own fault; for even the last thing to accomplish their happiness, the wedding garment, faith, was offered to them; but they refused to believe, or did not remain in the faith unto the end.

We have seen, my friends, God is just in all His dealings; man alone is to be blamed. Let us accept the Gospel call in sincere, steadfast faith and remain true to our calling to the end; and we shall, when the King comes to view His guests, ***“not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”***⁵ Amen.

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

¹ Ezekiel 33:11

² John 3:16

³ Daniel 9:24

⁴ Hymn 331

⁵ Hebrews 10:39