

101120 Matthew 22:1-14
Kingdom Come series: "Invited"

You're invited to something incredibly special. You're invited personally – not just y'all are invited, but you, individually, are invited. You are invited, and your response to the invitation is of urgent, utmost importance.

What's this invitation all about? Jesus tells us.

But, first, let me just say, invitations can be tricky. Invitations involve etiquette, courtesy, and decorum. Invitations require decisions, choices, and actions.

How many of you ever received an invitation, and then just set it aside and forgot about it? Have you ever picked up that invitation sometime later, and realized that you missed the RSVP date? Ever made up an excuse to get out of an invitation?

I hope you don't do any of that with this invitation. Because, again, you are invited to something super-special. It's a personal invitation, and your response is urgently important.

You see, this invitation comes from Jesus himself. The Lord wants you to be part of his kingdom. You're invited to the kingdom of God!

Now, what does that mean, the kingdom of God? Isn't that heaven? Isn't that the life to come? Well, sure, we all want to go to heaven. Someday. In the distant future, when our life on earth comes to an end. Then what's so urgent and important about this invitation for our lives here and now?

You're invited to the kingdom of God, and Jesus wants us all to know today that the kingdom of God is not just a future

reality. It's not just about checking into the heavenly hotel down the road. The kingdom of God is also right here and right now, Jesus teaches us. The kingdom of God is a present reality.

So you're being invited to something that's not just a little bit special. It's life-changing special! It's an invitation that's absolutely personal, one that affects every part of your life. And the way you respond to this invitation speaks volumes about how you really regard God, and his place in your heart, day-by-day.

You're invited to God's kingdom. Today. Right now.

Let's talk about this kingdom of God. Again, it's not just a kingdom in the world to come. It's here already. When the Son of God came from heaven into our world, taking on our human flesh, he began his ministry by proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 1:17). In other words, God's heavenly kingdom was breaking into our human existence in the person of Jesus himself. "The time is fulfilled," Jesus said, "and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14).

For those who heard Jesus' powerful sermons, for those whose bodies were healed by his divine hands, for those who were social outcasts but loved by Christ, the kingdom of God was literally at hand. Literally upon them.

So the people back then had decisions to make, choices to ponder. "Do I believe that this Jesus of Nazareth truly is God? My God? Do I accept his rule and reign in my life?" And God helped many of those people to believe, to trust, to respond. But many others declined. Their sinful, ungodly nature prevailed; and they rejected Jesus.

It was as if the people back then received an invitation: a heaven-sent invitation. But not an envelope like this. Jesus himself was the invitation. Some joyfully entered the kingdom, accepting Christ by faith; but some just couldn't do it.

Here we are, all these centuries later. And, no, we don't have Jesus Christ walking and talking among us, performing miracles and demonstrating his divinity. We walk only by faith, not by sight. We have his words, though. We read his Gospel. We listen to his story. We hear his voice, speaking to our hearts and calling us to faith. We have his Holy Spirit, nudging us to believe and trust in Jesus.

We are invited. You are invited. And it's really no different for you than it was for the people in Jesus' day. Jesus is the invitation. God wants you to be part of his kingdom. He wants you to know his grace. He wants you to be saved from sin.

But the invitation is for today! It's for right now. Because the kingdom of God, in Jesus Christ, has come! The kingdom of heaven is at hand! It's in the midst of you, Jesus says. It's in you!

Jesus mentions this kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, over ten dozen times in the Gospels. And Jesus has dozens of ways that he wants his kingdom to take effect in your life this very day. Even when the world around you is a mess – and Lord knows it is these days – we Christians have the comfort and joy of knowing that we are living right now in the kingdom of heaven. For those who truly believe in Jesus, the kingdom of God is a present reality. Today, right now, you're invited!

Our Gospel lesson today is one more of Jesus' marvelous parables. "The kingdom of heaven is like," he tells us, "an invitation." A king invites his guests to come to the wedding feast of his son. But these honored guests are too busy, and can't bother. They reject the invitation. So the king destroys them. Then he sends his servants out, and tells them to invite anyone and everyone to the feast. They gather up people from everywhere, both bad and good. And the wedding feast is full of guests.

Jesus spoke this parable to the Pharisees and temple chiefs, the religious elite who had rejected him. They're not part of God's kingdom, they're told, because Jesus himself is the invitation. They were invited to something incredibly special, personally invited; but their negative response to the invitation – their rejection of Jesus – sealed their fate.

What's your response?

It's urgently important, isn't it? Just believe and trust in Jesus. Put your faith in the Lord who gave his life for you, who forgives your sins and saves your soul. He provides all you need to get into the feast, into the kingdom.

You are invited! Amen.