

## **Matthew 22:1-14<sup>iv v</sup>**

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

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### **<sup>iv</sup> About Matthew 22:1-14**

The parable of the wedding banquet addresses God's initiative to open the reign of God to all. Matthew structures the story to illustrate salvation history. The first group of servants were like the prophets and the second group the Christian apostles and missionaries. Verse 7 may allude to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 as God's punishment of Jewish nation. Those brought in from the byroads are the Gentiles.

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Matthew may have added verses 11-14 to warn his community that it, like Israel, stands under judgment and must be prepared. Matthew recognizes that the Church contains “both good and bad” (v. 10) who can be separated only on judgment day.

The proper wedding clothing probably represents a new life marked by the fruits of repentance in good deeds. Since in Judaism good works were expected to act as “intercessors” before God (Acts 10:4), the guest without the garment is “speechless” (v. 12). Christians are cautioned not to rely on the calling, but to respond by living their baptism in daily life.

## ▼ Reflection and Response

“Everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet” (Matthew 22:4). The generosity of the invitation in Matthew’s gospel contrasts with the hostility of those who reject it. “What boors these are!” we think. Then we may remember the times we turned from those closest to us, and even from God.

How often have we refused an invitation to God’s feast? Intent on adhering to a schedule, we may have missed the moments when grace slips through the cracks in our routines. How often the beauty of nature or the chance to share our lives with another eludes us. Today’s parable reminds us that what seems vital to us may not be so important to God. In the divine economy, laughing at someone’s joke or savoring a sunset may take priority over boosting the Gross National Product.

The gospel raises another question: do we really know what nourishes us? What experiences draw us closer to God? The answer varies as much as individuals do. For some, God’s presence bubbles in conversation with friends; for others, it sings in solitude. For some, it may come through music; for others, through a walk along the beach. After we identify those experiences that we find most life-giving, then we must reflect on how much time we give these. Most of us wouldn’t dream of going through a day without nourishing our bodies, yet we fail to devote comparable time to nourish our souls. Are we starving at God’s banquet? How do we respond to the overtures of the divine Host?