God's Graciousness and Our Response

Elwood Robinson – 4 Oct 2026

Matt 21:22-23 This is 'in your face passage of scripture. Let's first remember who Jesus is speaking to. The chief priests and the elders. Jesus answers them and in his answers he goes on to tell them parables. The parable of the two sons. The parable of the tenants and then the parable of the wedding feast.

Matt 22:1 By refusing to come the guests deliberately insulted the dignity of the king. Remember that Jesus is comparing the Kingdom of God and its King to a king who gave a banquet for his son. This is serious stuff.

[V4] It sounds like a plea. How things worked that time in that part of the world was that the king honoured the guests with an invitation, and they appropriately responded with a promise to come. The second is merely to inform them that the dinner is now ready. Because the exact time of completion of preparations was difficult to determine in advance a second invitation at the appropriate time was standard procedure. We note that the guests had refused the first invitation, but this king continues the tradition and issues the second. This is mind-blowing. The king has been insulted by them and yet he doesn't respond as would be expected. To insult a king is really dangerous stuff, execution possible. But this king graciously, generously gives them another chance. He longingly wants them to attend. But they still refuse.

[V5] Under normal circumstances these are perfectly legitimate things to do, but here they are a barely disguised concerted plan to deliberately insult the king. And it's taken even further.

[V6] Slaughtering messengers constituted and explicitly revolutionary act [again let's remember who Jesus is telling this parable to]. This king, gracious, generous and kind that he is, is also no weakling to be disrespected and insulted without consequences.

[V7] The king was furious, outraged. These people have "gone a bridge too far" so to speak. The mistreatment of royal representatives was outright treason, constituting a declaration of revolt. The parable is pointing to the treatment God's servant - messengers, the prophets were known to have received. The parable tells us that God sent his army and destroyed those murderers and destroyed their city. Burning the city of revolutionaries was a common military practice. Here is the possibility an allusion to what happened in Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The king, having been shunned by a particular group of people, doesn't give up. He graciously, mercifully extends an invitation to others to attend the banquet. He's determined to share this wonderful time with others.

[V9] He says go and find as many as you can find. No discrimination. The servants rounded up everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless – every place filled. Perhaps some of us can relate to the last part. Perhaps our style of life wasn't ideal. But God in his mercy and wisdom chose to call, to draw us to himself and his Kingdom way at this time. It is indeed a privilege.

The parable goes on to tell us that the king saw a man who had no wedding garment. It seems clear that the generous king not only provided the free feast for the wedding of his son, not only invited everyone to it, but also provided beautiful festal robes for all to wear. Hence, the poor need not be ashamed of their rags and the rich no right to be proud of their dinner jackets and gowns.

Again, can we relate to that ourselves? Christians are called from all walks of life. Some have higher status in society than others. Some have bigger bank balances. Some are better educated than others. But we are clothed in the same righteousness of Christ. Not our own, but his. A true festal garment.

[v11-14] This man has no festal garment. Asked why, the man has no answer. The punishment seems ludicrously severe for having come to a wedding improperly dressed. But the point goes far deeper. The man who scorned the host's provision of wedding clothes insulted the host and showed personal complacency. His best was not good enough for God. The King. It shows contempt, doesn't it? Remember the story is about the Kingdom of heaven. The Kingdom of God.

So here is a warning to anyone who relies on their own fancied goodness obtain entry into the Kingdom. There are overtones of Isaiah 64:6 here. That is the human predicament. We are literally not fit to be seen before God, let alone enjoy the feast of his Kingdom.

Barclay comments on **Isa 61:10** – *"The way in which a man comes to anything demonstrates the spirit in which he comes. If we go to visit a friend's house, we do not go in the clothes we would wear in the shipyard of the garden. It is simply a matter of respect that we should present ourselves in the friend's house as nearly as we can. The fact that we prepare ourselves to go there is the way in which we outwardly show our affection and esteem of our friend."* As we have seen in the previous verses, we don't even have to dress ourselves in an appropriate manner. God provides it all if we are willing to accept it.

Mat 22:14; Mat 20:18 Jesus came and gave his life for 'the many'. Going back to Matthew 22:14, the Greek word *eklektoi* can mean chosen but it can also be translated 'excellent'. Verse 14 could read *"For everyone is invited but few respond in excellence."* We have seen the man in the parable did not respond excellently. **Michael Green** in **"The Message of Matthew"** writes, *"There is divine call and human response. Without the latter we do not show ourselves to be among the elect. So Jesus means [in the parable] that many had received he call but few had show themselves 'elect' by responding to it."* They had received the call but hadn't responded. They hadn't embraced excellence. By not responding to the

call they had chosen not to be chosen. Matthew 22:14 is a tough verse and many commentators avoid it.

Tom Wright tackles it this way*: "The point of the story is not Jesus telling the truth, the truth that political and religious leaders often try to hide, the truth that God's Kingdom is a Kingdom in which love and justice and truth and mercy and holiness reign unhindered. They are the clothes you need to wear for the wedding. And if you refuse to put them on, you are saying you don't want to stay at the party. That is the reality. If we don't have the courage to say so, we are deceiving ourselves, and everyone who listens to us."*

In summary, Matthew 22 includes the parable of a king who invites guests to a wedding banquet only to have many reject the invitation or try to enter on their own terms. God's Kingdom and invitation cannot be controlled, minimised or reshaped by human assumptions. God is bigger than our limitations and we are called to receive him as he reveals himself.

James 5:16 tells us that the prayers of a righteous person are greatly effective. The righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. So let's continue to pray for one another - and ourselves, that we would continue following the narrow way in line with God's will. And pray for our loved ones, and those who don't love us whoever they may be. That they will accept God's invitation when it is offered. That they will clothe themselves with the festal robes offered by the King. Amen.