

1 The Inviting God

- To the biggest banquet of all time!

2 Tonight's Scripture

- “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.” (Matt 22:2–3 NIV)
- “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’” (Matt 22:4 NIV)

3 Tonight's Scripture

- “But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.” (Matt 22:5–7 NIV)
- “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.” (Matt 22:8–10 NIV)

4 Tonight's Scripture

- “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.” (Matt 22:11–12 NIV)
- “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matt 22:13 NIV)
- “For many are invited, but few are chosen.” (Matt 22:13–14 NIV)

5 Introduction

- In West Africa—Ivory Coast, to be specific—there’s a huge, enormous cathedral. It looks like a big pearl rising from the surrounding area, which is an area of extreme poverty.
- The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace of Yamoussoukro is listed in Guinness World Records as the largest church in the world, surpassing the previous record holder, Saint Peter's Basilica.
- It has an area of 30,000 square meters (322,917 sq. ft.) and is 158 meters (518 ft.) high.

6 Introduction

- However, not everybody is thrill about this distinction—which includes the Roman Catholic Church.
- The Ivory Coast is a small country with a small population and the average annual per capita income is only \$650.00.

- So then, why build a basilica costing \$300 million in a poverty-stricken country?
- Some of this may have to do with the motivation of the country's dictator who some say was trying to memorialize himself with a great religious undertaking.
- In fact, the country's leader is pictured in the church in stain-glass standing with Jesus.

7 Introduction

- But there is more to this story that makes all this extravagant cost all the more troubling.
- The biggest problem is that for the most part, the church remains empty.
- There is only 350 who call, Our Lady of Peace, their home church and there is room for 18,000.
- It was built, but nobody comes . . . almost nobody, anyway.

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9 Comparison

- The big, empty church in Africa is not exactly the same thing as we read in Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast. But it does remind us of it.
- In our text, we have a king hosting a wedding party.
- It's not a big church the king is building, but, rather, a huge, mother-of-all-banquets, where no expense has been spared.
- You would think people would be rushing to get into the doors, but instead they all give excuses on why not to come.

10 Excuses, Excuses, and Excuses

- In Luke's account of Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast, he gives specific examples of some of these excuses.
 - "The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'" (Luke 14:18 NIV)
 - "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'" (Luke 14:19 NIV)
 - "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'" (Luke 14:20 NIV)

11 Invite Others

- Upon hearing this, the owner of the house (Luke's Gospel) becomes very angry and tells his servants . . . "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." (Luke 14:21 NIV)
- The servants do so, but there is still room at the banquet.

- “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’” (Luke 14:23–24 NIV)

12 **The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

- What is shocking about this parable is the conduct of those who are invited to the banquet.
- The king has gone to no expense. He has butchered the oxen and fattened cattle. Everything is ready.
- The only thing that is left is for the guests to arrive.
- Yet they turn up their noses and make lame and insulting excuses.
- Moreover, who ever heard of killing the mailman because you got a wedding invitation you didn’t like.

13 **The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

- I don’t know about you, but one of the most embarrassing things to happen to people is to plan and put on a party and nobody comes.
- It can really be devastating and many a host have taken it personally and considered it a form of rejection and disrespect.
- So then, for a king who wants to honor his son, has guests who treat his invitation lightly and make excuses can be greatly offended.
- However, it is not just the guests treating the invitation with contempt, they seize the king’s servants, mistreat them, and even kill them.

14 **God, the Inviter**

- One of the exciting things about God is that He is an inviting and giving God.
- God is always inviting us to come:
 - Come to the still waters,
 - Come home,
 - Come to the banquet,
 - Come to abundant life,
 - Come to worship,
 - Come to God Himself.

15 **To Honor the Son**

- In the story, the king (God) is excited about his banquet because he is wanting to honor the marriage of his son (Jesus).
- The calf has been fattened and slaughtered, the tables are set, the DJ and band has been hired.

- And no matter the response of others, the king (God) keeps on sending invitations out.
- It is His desire that the banquet hall be full and he will keep sending out invitations until it is.

16 Inviting Others

- At the end of Mathew's gospel, he records a commission that Jesus gives to His disciples.
- Jesus says, Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, . . . (Matt 28:19 NIV)
- How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:14–15 NIV)

17 Inviting Others

- The point is that God is still handing out invitations to His grand feast.
- There is still room and once the hall is filled, the banquet will begin.
- We who are his servants are to spread the word.
- There is a marriage to take place between Christ and His Bride (Church) and being there to experience it all is going to be awesome.
- As it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor 2:9 NIV)

18 The Marriage Feast of the Lamb

- The Marriage Feast that is described in Matthew 22 and Luke 14, will be an actual event that will be fulfilled in the last days.
- It is called the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and will occur just after the "rapture" of the saints.
- It will be held in heaven and will last more than just one day.
- In fact, it will last for several months and be a time of much rejoicing.
- It will be a time when we are reunited with friends and lost loved ones, receive rewards for our faith, and see Jesus face-to-face.

19 The Marriage Supper

- The concept of the marriage supper is best understood in light of the wedding customs in the time of Christ.
- These wedding customs had three major parts.
 - First, a marriage contract was signed by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom. This began what was called the betrothal period.
 - The second step in the process usually occurred a year later, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his male friends, goes to the house of the bride at midnight, creating a torchlight parade through the streets to his father's home.

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- The bride would have a rough idea when this would happen, but she and her maidens wouldn't know the hour, so they would have to be prepared with their lamps ready. (Parable of the 10 Virgins)
- The third phase was the marriage supper itself, which would go on for days, as illustrated by the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-2).

21 **Celebration in Heaven**

- Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns." (Rev 19:6 NIV)
- So, what in the world could be causing all this commotion? Is it the cry of trouble or celebration?
- Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (Rev 19:7 NIV)
- Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Rev 19:8 NIV)

22 **Wearing the Wrong Clothes**

- I don't know about you, but have you ever been worried about going to an event where you might be either "over" dressed or "under" dressed.
- In fact, if we guessed wrong, it could lead to embarrassment to both ourselves and our host.
- It use to be that when going to church, people would wear the very best clothes.
- As a child, I use to resent this big time, as it seemed the nicer the clothes the less comfortable they were.
- However, can we be too casual and take our host for granted?

23 **Wedding Clothes**

- In Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast there is a description of someone who came to the feast too casual.
- "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless." (Matt 22:11-12 NIV)
- It is interesting to note that while those who ignored the kings invitation had excuses this man had none.
- Evidently, this man should have known that coming to such a great banquet one should dress appropriately and so honor the host.

24 **Royal Wedding Invitation**

25 **To the Church at Sardis**

- In Revelation 3, Jesus addresses a church that had a reputation for being alive, but was dead.
- Jesus tells the church, “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.” (Rev 3:2 NIV)
- “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.” (Rev 3:3 NIV)
- “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.” (Rev 3:4 NIV)

26 **To the Church at Sardis**

- He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Rev 3:5–6 NIV)

27 **Paradigms & Paradoxes**

- I know that there are some of us who suffer from what is called Paradigm Paralysis.
- It is a condition that keeps us from seeing things in Scripture because it doesn't fit our model of understanding.
- In fact, if your paradigms produce paradoxes (conflicting truth statements), it is usually a sign that our paradigm needs a little work.
- So when a person changes or modifies their paradigms when they are presented with new revelation and understanding, they are in my book a noble person.

28 **Summary**

- God has invited us to a Wedding Banquet.
- It is the marriage of His Son to His Bride the Church.
- God has gone to no expense in preparing for it. It will be the biggest celebration of all time.
- In fact, God wants everyone to attend and not be turned away on a technicality.
- So then, let us not make some lame excuse on why we can't come or why we can't honor our host with our attire.
- Therefore, let the RSVP read in the most rejoicing terms possible. “Yes, God, I accept your invitation. Party of one (1).” Amen.

29 **Everything is Ready and You're Invited!**