

Parable of the Wedding Feast 2026 Matthew 22 v 1-14

It is said *“that you open your eyes before the marriage. and keep your mouth shut after the marriage.”*

It's hard to imagine that anyone receiving an invitation to a royal wedding would refuse to go. When Prince William married Catherine Middleton in 2011, the guests naturally included their own families, members of other royal families, religious and political leaders. But, breaking with tradition, half the guests were friends from their childhood and university days, as well as representatives of the charities they supported, together with celebrities and some people who would never expect such an invitation. As everyone present at dinner was deemed *‘equally important’* to the couple, the tables were a mix of royals, family members and friends.

Out of the 2000 invitations only fifteen of these excused themselves declined the invitation. Most of them through ill health, or other events that they could not avoid. One person, however, did make the excuse that it was far too near his birthday. Perhaps he couldn't find the right outfit?

Today's parable of the wedding feast starts with an invitation to a huge banquet that a king has prepared for his son's wedding. The guests have been invited, but they find all sorts of excuses not to come. Amazingly, the king tries three times until the banqueting hall is full. In the end, he has invited everyone to the great feast, both good and bad.

The parable tells us how these invited guests made their different excuses. But begs the question, what about ourselves? Just think about some of the excuses you might have made in the past? Were they really justified? Excuses are usually made to get out of something we don't want to do. At school, some of my students were very good at making excuses, because they hadn't done their homework. Excuses ranging from their dog destroyed it, leaving it on the bus, and their mum accidentally putting it in the bin when she was tidying up. The problem was that it was very often the same students who were in a habit of making excuses. Making excuses can so easily become a habit, and a way of life.

A father had asked his son to paint a fence. When asked why he hadn't done it, the boy replied, *“Well, I couldn't find an axe.”* *“What's an axe got to do with it?”* his father exclaimed. *“Nothing. But when I don't want to do something, one excuse is just as good as another!”* said the son.

I love this. There is the church that decided to have ***“A no excuse Sunday”*** for not coming to church. In their church newsletter they listed all the different excuses that some of their parishioners were making for missing Mass. I don't know if it worked or not, but I'm sure some would have said that they can't read.

The truth that Jesus wants us to grasp is that there can be ***no excuses*** in the kingdom of God.

The parable teaches us that everyone is welcome, and invited to the great feast that God has prepared for us. It reflects God's generosity. Everything we need is offered to us in abundance. We are all welcome at the feast, and no one is left out. However, we need to recognise that it isn't a one-sided relationship. God may reach out to us in love, but are we ready to respond?

The parable makes it very clear that some of us are not ready. We are too busy. Maybe have too many distractions. The invited guests refuse the offer. For them the invitation falls to the bottom of their list of their priorities. Likewise, some of us are unwilling to change. Faith isn't at the top of our list of priorities.

Then there is the guest at the end of the parable who doesn't have a wedding garment. He's invited, and he's happy to come along to the feast, but he won't put on his best clothes so he can fully experience the joy, goodness and happiness on offer. What does this mean? It suggests that just by turning up is not good enough. We need to take time to pray and make changes to our attitudes and behaviour in our own lives. Only then so can we participate fully in the invitation to the feast.

Of course, every one of us is busy. Many of us live in the '*fast lane*.' We have constructed a society where it feels like that there is no time. No time to spend with our family, and no time to help others. No time to simply stop, rest, and pray. It seems that our value as human beings is measured only by our productivity, as if we are robots. Yet as humans, as the children of God, it is important that we make time to step back, and reflect on *who* we are. Time made to pray, and listen to God's voice in our lives. How else can we respond the God's invitation, and participate fully in the feast of the Kingdom of God that is on offer?

The beauty of this parable is that it presents the kingdom of God as being like a wedding feast. It is seen as highly desirable and attractive. We do not have to be '*worthy*' in the eyes of the world. The truth is that none of us are worthy of God's invitation. Good and bad, all are invited, as God wants all of us to enter the Kingdom life. Then, there is the man who was thrown out because he is not wearing a wedding garment. At baptism, a white garment is put on the baptised. This is a powerful symbol telling us that we are to be *clothed* in Christ. A salutary reminder that we are called to grow into the likeness of Christ. We have to put on, and live the Gospel life, in order to be ready to accept Christ's invitation to his kingdom feast.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that uniting us with Christ in our baptism; you have made us new creatures; the old life is over, and the new life has begun so that we may now walk in newness of life, and no longer live under the dominion of sin and death.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.