

Read: Matthew 22:1-14

Go to God's Banquet

Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "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.

"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.'

"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.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So 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, the bad as well as the good, and 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 wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless.

"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.'

"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Répondez s'il vous plaît" is a French phrase which means, "please respond." People in France don't use the phrase very much anymore, but they used to, and people in other countries still use the initials R.S.V.P. Maybe someone asked you to R.S.V.P. to the invitation to their birthday party. They are saying, "Please respond to this invitation, so I know how many cupcakes to buy." When two people get married, they want all their friends and family to come so they send out invitations signed R.S.V.P. You may occasionally respond by saying, "Sorry, but I cannot come." Perhaps you have something else scheduled for that day. Maybe it's too far away. There are good reasons to excuse yourself from some parties, but some parties are just too good to pass up.

Jesus told a story about that. A man invited people to a banquet. The banquet Jesus described is just like the one from Isaiah chapter 25. There was tasty meat at the feast, and everyone's favorite drinks, and great music for dancing because two people were getting married. In Isaiah 25 the banquet represented heaven, and that's what Jesus is talking about too. You'd have to be crazy to pass up such a great party.

But some people did. When the banquet was ready messengers went out saying "R.S.V.P. respond please." Some people ignored the messengers. Others hurt them. Jesus' story makes those people sound crazy for skipping the wedding feast.

That's exactly what people are doing when they ignore or don't trust Jesus. God has done everything necessary for us to have peace in our hearts and eternal life in heaven. God even delivered the clothes we need to get into heaven—a robe of righteousness woven out of Jesus' perfect life. We get to wear Jesus' perfection as if it belonged to us, and it's all a free gift.

Yet every person who has ever been born, in some part of their heart, resists God's invitation. Maybe we don't like to admit we need God. Maybe we prefer to do life our own way. People have lots of reasons for saying no to God, but none of them are good. It would be crazy to reject his invitation. So don't! Go to the banquet he has prepared for you.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Can you remember the reasons why people in Jesus' story didn't come to the wedding?
- What was Jesus teaching us about his invitation to heaven?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- If you were the messenger in Jesus' story, how would you convince people to come to the wedding feast?
- When people ignore or reject Jesus, what does that tell you about them?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How could you teach the same lesson as Jesus taught without using a story?
- Can you explain why Jesus would need to tell a story with such a sad ending?

Closing Prayer:

God in heaven, thank you for preparing such a wonderful heaven for us. Thank for you for giving us all we need to come into your heaven. Help us always receive your messages with joy, excited to hear from you and be with you. Amen.