

The Mind of Christ

Preaching in the Enemy’s Camp – Part 3

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our series on the Mind of Christ, we have arrived at the final week in the life of Jesus, and we’re SPECIFICALLY looking at the events that occurred during the week that was commonly referred to as PASSOVER WEEK.
 - A. On Tuesday of that week, Jesus teaches a series of six parables as the religious leaders in Jerusalem – the chief priests and elders of the people – bitterly confront Jesus and challenge His authority.
 1. We’ve already looked at the first two parables – the parable of “The Two Sons” and the parable of “The Wicked Vinedressers.”
 2. Now, we want to turn our attention to the THIRD PARABLE – one that is commonly known as the parable of “The Wedding Feast.”
 - B. THIS parable is recorded in Matthew (**Matthew chapter 22**), and it’s also recorded in Luke (**Luke chapter 14**).
 1. However, when we take a closer look at these two accounts, we find that Luke’s account takes place much earlier than Matthew’s record.

- a. MATTHEW’S account has Jesus teaching this parable on TUESDAY of Passover Week – just a few days before Jesus will be arrested and crucified.
 - b. But LUKE’S record has Jesus teaching a SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT version of this same parable about SIX MONTHS EARLIER.
 - (1). On THIS occasion Jesus was dining in the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees.
2. Although these parables were taught at different times, they are VERY similar.
- a. So, in THIS study, we’ll be referring to BOTH parables, although we’ll be using the parable in LUKE as the PRIMARY text.
- C. If you remember, the first two parables Jesus taught on this Tuesday of Passover Week – the parable of “The Two Sons,” and the parable of “The Wicked Vinedressers” – were specifically directed against His accusers; the chief priests and the elders of the people.
1. According to MATTHEW’S account, it appears that this THIRD parable is ALSO primarily directed at these same evil men.

BODY:

I. The parable of “The Wedding Feast” tells a very simple story – a king prepares a great wedding ceremony for his son. I want to begin by reading from LUKE’S account.

A. **Luke 14:16-24** – *Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' 18 But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' 20 Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' 22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"*

- B. According to this parable, a key part of the wedding ceremony was an elaborate feast.
1. When a wealthy man planned to hold a great feast like this, he would set a specific DAY, but NOT the EXACT HOUR.
 - a. Feasts of this kind were often so elaborate, with so many preparations, that it would be virtually impossible to set a specific time for the beginning of the feast.
 2. However, when the time for the feast drew NEAR, the guests of HONOR were summoned to the wedding feast by servants, and were given ample time to get ready. They would then be escorted to the feast by the servants.
 - a. This was done as a matter of courtesy for the guests of honor ONLY, so that they wouldn’t have to spend all day waiting for the start of the feast.
 3. The OTHER guests, however, had to be ready to go at a moments notice.
 - a. Generally, this LAST GROUP of guests would fall into one of two categories:
 - (1). One group would be those who were SO GRATEFUL for an invitation to the wedding feast, they would be

ready EARLY – often WAITING AT THE DOOR, all decked out in their finest garments!

(2). The OTHER group waited until the last minute and often rushed to the wedding feast unprepared.

b. There was a REASON why this LAST GROUP was always unprepared.

(1). They simply took a CASUAL ATTITUDE toward the invitation.

(2). As a result they would arrive in their everyday work clothes, and would either NOT be permitted to join the feast AT ALL, or would have to STAND TO THE SIDE while everyone else enjoyed the feast.

C. Jesus tells us that when the great day came, the servants were sent out to summon the GUESTS OF HONOR.

1. However, EVERYONE OF THEM began to make excuses for being UNABLE to attend: **(Luke 14:18-20)**

a. One had purchased a field and needed to go see it. **(v. 18)**

b. Another had purchased some oxen and needed to try them out. **(v. 19)**

c. And the third had just married, and flatly said, *“I cannot come”* – PERIOD! **(v. 20)**

D. Matthew’s account is even more graphic. Let’s read it together.

1. **Matt 22:1-14** – *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" 5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'*

garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ 14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

2. In Matthew’s account, Jesus says that the guests of honor (who were probably other city-kings) didn’t just simply REFUSE to come, **THEY MADE LIGHT OF THE INVITATION! (v. 5)**
 - a. In fact, Jesus says **SOME** of the honored guests even went so far as to **MISTREAT** the servants, and even **KILL** some.
(v. 6)
 - b. In **ANCIENT** Middle-Eastern cultures (just as it is **TODAY**), it’s considered a **GRAVE DISCOURTESY** to fail to show hospitality. But to **REFUSE HOSPITALITY** is a **DELIBERATE INSULT!**
2. According to Matthew’s account, the king becomes so **ENRAGED** over the **INSULT** that he sets out to **AVENGE** this terrible injustice.
 - a. He sent out his armies to destroy these city-kings **AND** the cities over which they ruled.

- b. These men had been GRACIOUSLY invited to join with this king in celebrating his son’s wedding, but they INSULTED the king AND his son by refusing to come.
 - c. Therefore, as far as THIS king was concerned they were not only UNWORTHY, they DESERVED TO DIE!
3. Finally, the king commands his servants to go throughout the city and invite all the UNDER-PRIVILEGED to come to the feasts.
- a. The servants did as they were commanded and combed the city streets and alleys, and even the highways leading into the city.
 - b. They invited EVERYONE to come – the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the righteous and the unrighteous, the morally clean and those who were morally corrupt.
- C. But in Matthew’s account of this parable, Jesus adds one additional thing.
- 1. During the feast, the king noticed a man who had come into the feast without his wedding garment.
 - a. Wedding garments were special robes that were worn ONLY on special occasions, such as weddings or great feasts.

- b. Although the other guests came at a moment’s notice, they put on THEIR wedding garments before they entered the feast.
 - c. But not this man. Instead of joining in the feast, he SHOULD have been standing off to the side with the other guests who had arrived unprepared.
 - d. Instead, he SITS RIGHT DOWN and starts eating. This was not only a BREECH OF ETIQUETTE, it was an INSULT to the other guests who HAD come prepared, and ESPECIALLY to the king and his son.
2. Some commentators suggest that special robes were frequently provided by the HOST for his valued guests to wear – guests who, for one reason or another, had come to a feast or special occasion WITHOUT their OWN robe.
- a. Virtually EVERYONE in those days had a special garment that was set aside for special occasions like this.
 - b. But sometimes a TRAVELER might be invited to a wedding feast, and would need to borrow one because he hadn’t packed HIS before he left on his trip.

- c. At other times, a guest might be invited to a wedding who was too POOR to have a special garment of their own, so they would be allowed to BORROW a garment from the host.
 - d. In fact, this is very similar to the practice of some exclusive restaurants today that require a coat and tie to be worn by all male guests.
 - e. If you come in WITHOUT a coat and tie, the restaurant gives you two choices: either borrow a coat and tie from THEM, or LEAVE!
4. Jesus tells us that because THIS man had breeched etiquette and shown NO RESPECT for the king and his son, he was ordered to be bound and thrown out of the wedding feast.

II. So, what’s the meaning of this parable? What was Jesus trying to teach here?

A. First, the children of Israel in the days of Jesus believed that when the Messiah came, a new age would dawn, and the Messiah would begin His reign in Jerusalem by hosting a GREAT FEAST.

- 1. It would be a time for national CELEBRATION – a time of GREAT JOY!

- a. Jesus **BORROWED** from this belief to provide the basis for
THIS parable.
2. In **MATTHEW’S ACCOUNT**, Jesus compared the **WEDDING FEAST** to the **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**.
 - a. The **SPIRITUAL** kingdom, which we know as the Lord’s church, was meant to be a place for **JOY** and **HAPPINESS** – a place for **CELEBRATION!**
 - b. It would be a place where people could **LAUGH** and **ENJOY** the company of one another.
 - c. It would **ALSO** be a place where people could be **FILLED** with God’s **SPIRITUAL** food.
- B. But Jesus goes on to tell us something about the **GUESTS** that were **INITIALLY** invited to the wedding feast.
 1. They were **SPECIAL** guests – they were a chosen people.
 - a. Jesus is obviously making reference to **SOME** of His own Jewish brethren – they had been given a **SPECIAL** invitation to come to the wedding feast.
 - b. For centuries, the prophets had been announcing the coming of the Messiah, and the great wedding feast.
 2. But sadly, these **SPECIAL** guests **REFUSED** to come to the feast and began to make excuse after excuse.

- a. Like the man in the parable who bought a field and needed to go see it, THESE guests were more concerned about their BUSINESS enterprises and the other activities of the world than they were in seeking after God
 - b. And like the man who bought oxen and needed to try them out, THESE guests were more concerned about their MATERIAL POSSESSIONS than they were in pursuing spiritual interests.
 - c. And like the third man who had married a wife and refused to come, THESE GUESTS were more concerned in preserving their EARTHLY heritage than they were in laying claim to their SPIRITUAL heritage.
 - d. And finally, just as these men were ALL destroyed for showing contempt for the invitation they received, THESE guests would also face a terrible judgment for their refusal to come to the wedding feast of the King’s Son.
3. The problem here was NOT that these things – business interests, possessions and family interests – were bad.
 - a. The problem was that THESE GUESTS loved the WORLD and ALL it offered MORE THAN they loved GOD.

4. And NOWHERE was this more TRUE than in the lives of the SPIRITUAL LEADERS of Israel – the chief priests and elders of the people.
 - a. They consistently made an OUTWARD display of holiness and devotion.
 - b. But INWARDLY their hearts were set on the WORLD and the things OF the world.
 5. If ANYONE should have welcomed the invitation to join in the RICH SPIRITUAL FEAST God was giving in honor of His Son Jesus, it SHOULD have been THESE men – those were spent their WHOLE LIVES studying the Law and the prophets.
 6. But because THESE men rejected the offer to come to the feast, they would not only be DESTROYED in a coming judgment (an obvious reference to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70), but their place would be given to OTHERS.
 - a. AND, if you remember, THAT’S the VERY THING they feared the MOST! (**John 11:48**)
- C. Jesus goes on to say that in the place of THESE guests, OTHERS were invited to take their place. So, who ARE these “OTHERS”?

1. Matthew describes them as *“both good and bad”* (**Matt. 22:10**), whereas Luke describes them as *“the poor, the maimed (physically deformed), the lame, and the blind”* (**Luke 14:21**).
 2. And ALSO notice that there were actually TWO invitations given to these “OTHERS.”
 - a. Those who responded to the FIRST invitation were MORE THAN WILLING to come to the feast. They EAGERLY accepted the invitation!
 - (1). But, according to Luke’s account, there was STILL room. Therefore the king commanded his servants to go out and find MORE people to invite.
 - (2). And that brings us to the SECOND invitation.
 - b. But notice that those who responded to this SECOND invitation had to be “COMPELLED” to come to the feast – in other words, this SECOND group didn’t feel worthy to come to the feast, so they had to be CONVINCED and PURSUADED that the king wanted THEM to come to the feast AS WELL!
- D. So who are these “OTHERS?” I think they’re fairly easy to identify.
1. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven following His resurrection, He told His disciples that they were to be witnesses

to Him in JERUSALEM, and in all JUDEA and SAMARIA, and to THE END OF THE EARTH. **(Acts 1:8)**

2. On the day of Pentecost, when the apostle Peter finally told those who had murdered Jesus to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, he added, *“for this promise is to YOU and YOUR children, AND to ALL who are AFAR OFF.”* **(Acts 2:39)**

3. The apostle Paul would later write, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”* **(Romans 1:16)**

4. This is why the apostle Paul wrote to the saints in Ephesus – to GENTILE Christians – and say, *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* **(Ephesians 2:13)**

E. THIS part of Jesus’ parable becomes EASY to understand when we understand that the gospel of Christ was first preached to the Jews FIRST and THEN the gospel of Christ spread out to the Gentile world.

1. When the gospel of Christ was FIRST preached, it drew all kinds of people to Christ, especially those who were SPIRITUALLY impoverished – those who were SPIRITUALLY poor, maimed, lame, and blind.

- a. And the **FIRST** to hear and respond to the message of a resurrected Christ were spiritually impoverished Jews. They came to realize Jesus **WAS** the Messiah, and turned to Him in obedience to the gospel of Christ and were added by the Lord to His church.
2. And those who were the **SECOND** to hear and respond to the gospel of Christ were spiritually impoverished Gentiles – they had to be told that Jesus was not just King of kings and Lord of lords to the children of Israel, Jesus was the **SAVIOR** of the **WHOLE WORLD!**
 - a. When the **GENTILES (NON-Jews)** heard the message of the gospel of Christ, they **ALSO** turned in obedience and were **LIKEWISE** added by the Lord to His church.
- F. The **GREAT WEDDING FEAST** was for **JEW AND GENTILE ALIKE**.
 1. The hypocritical religious elite – the pious, self-righteous religious leaders of Israel – had **REJECTED** the Lord’s invitation to come to the feast, and would therefore be destroyed.
 2. But the **COMMON** people among the children of Israel – those who **KNEW** they were sinners and whose hardened hearts were softened at the preaching of the gospel of Christ – they were

MORE THAN WILLING to come to the feast and honor God AND His Son Jesus.

3. And when the gospel of Christ was preached to the Gentile world, and they understood that the God of heaven wasn’t JUST the God of the Jews, but the God of ALL mankind, and that Jesus didn’t die JUST for the people of ISRAEL, but for the WHOLE WORLD – they came to the feast too!

III. But there’s one last thing we need to consider here – the man in Matthew’s account who came to the feast without a wedding garment.

A. In the parable of Jesus, the king said to the servants, *“Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* **(Matthew 22:13)**

1. When we read that part of the parable, it doesn’t have the same impact on US as it did on the chief priests and elders of the people to whom Jesus was speaking.
2. THEY understood the significance of this part of the parable, because THEY were familiar with the prophecies of Zephaniah – the prophet of God who against Judah and Jerusalem in the days of King Josiah.

B. Over six hundred years earlier, the prophet Zephaniah ALSO spoke about a feast the Lord was about to host, and about those who were wearing “foreign” or “strange” apparel.

1. **Zephaniah 1:7-12** – *Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; for the day of the LORD is at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. "And it shall be, in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. And there shall be on that day," says the LORD, "the sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, a wailing from the Second Quarter, and a loud crashing from the hills. Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; all those who handle money are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.'"*
2. This prophecy was TERRIFYING! God was about to make a sacrifice and invite guests to partake of that sacrifice.

- a. The SACRIFICE God was preparing was JUDAH and the wicked and corrupt inhabitants and religious leaders of the city of JERUSALEM.
 - b. And the GUESTS whom God had invited to the feast were the NATIONS who would come to destroy these wicked people.
3. Why? The Lord added that He would punish all that *“are clothed with foreign (strange) apparel.” (v. 8)*
- a. The prophet Zephaniah was speaking to the people of Judah and Jerusalem who had taken OFF the clothing of RIGHTEOUSNESS and HOLINESS, and who had NOW clothed themselves in WICKEDNESS, REBELLION, and UNRIGHTEOUSNESS!
 - b. The people of God had become JUST LIKE the people of the wicked nations around them.
- C. As we said before, the chief priests and elders of the people CLEARLY understood the implication Jesus was making.
1. Just like the fate that awaited Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Zephaniah, God was preparing ANOTHER sacrifice in the days of Jesus.

- a. And THAT sacrifice would be the nation of Israel and specifically the city of Jerusalem and all its corrupt religious leaders.
 - b. And those who would be invited to feast on the riches of the nation of Israel were clearly the Romans.
2. Just as He had done in the parable of “The Wicked Vinedressers,” Jesus was ONCE AGAIN announcing the coming of a terrible judgment against the nation of Israel.
 4. Why? Just like in the days of Zephaniah, Jesus said the people of Israel and the religious leaders in HIS day had ALSO clothed themselves in wickedness, rebellion and unrighteousness.
 - a. Israel was a nation that had been invited to celebrate in a great feast, but which clothed itself in clothing unacceptable to God.
 - b. The nation of Israel would be bound and thrown into outer darkness.

CONCLUSION:

- I. So, what can WE learn from this parable? What can we apply to US?
 - A. Like the religious leaders in the days of Jesus – men who loved the world and the things of the world MORE than they loved God – there

are those in OUR day who are rejecting the invitation of God for the SAME REASON.

1. The apostle Paul said it best.
 - a. **I Corinthians 1:26-31** – *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."*
2. Those who are filled with conceit or those who are too preoccupied with the things of this world have ALWAYS rejected the invitation of Jehovah.
3. But those who KNOW they’re sinners, and who have no place to go but UP, EAGERLY accept the invitation to “come to the feast.”

4. Which one are you? Do the things of this world keep you from coming to the feast, or are you eager to feast on the riches of God’s spiritual blessings?
 - a. You’re one or the other.
- B. And remember the man in Matthew’s account who came to the feast without a wedding garment – the man who was dressed in an unacceptable manner? How are you dressed – spiritually speaking?
 1. Have you clothed yourself in righteousness and holiness by your obedience to the gospel of Christ, and by continuing to live – to the VERY best of your ability – a life of goodness and purity?
 2. Or are you clothed in wickedness, rebellion and unrighteousness?
 - a. It could be that you’ve NEVER taken advantage of the opportunity you’re being given to clothe yourself in righteousness and holiness – you’ve never taken advantage of the free gift of salvation because you’ve never come to Christ.
 - b. Or it could be that you’ve TAKEN OFF the garment of righteousness and holiness, and have gone BACK to wearing your OLD clothes of wickedness, rebellion and unrighteousness.

3. How are you clothed? You’re either spiritually clothed in a way that is acceptable to God or in a way that is unacceptable?
- C. It’s sad to think that God and His Son Jesus Christ went through SO MUCH to provide such a WONDERFUL feast, and yet, some of you will leave here this morning turning your back on that great blessing.
1. Why? The Lord doesn’t care whether you’re spiritually poor, or whether you’re spiritually maimed, lame or blind.
 2. He has a garment of righteousness and holiness waiting for you. All you have to do it simply accept it, and put it on.
 3. All things are ready. Why not come to the feast?