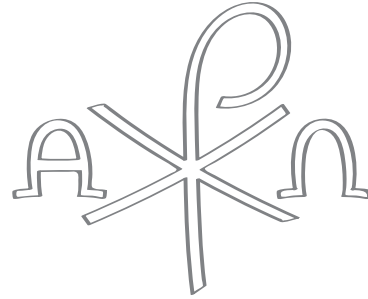


THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Andrew Richard



MATTHEW 22:1-14 ESV

Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle around AD 50. Jesus tells this parable during Holy Week. At this point the people were very sharply divided: those who loved Jesus and hung on His words and believed in Him, and those who hated Jesus and despised His words and refused to believe in Him. The tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners characterized the first group; the Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, elders, scribes, and lawyers characterized the second. Immediately before today's reading Jesus told the Parable of the Tenants, a strong warning against rejecting the Son of God.

¹ And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,

- The king in the parable is God the Father, and His Son is Jesus. "What is the wedding? The gracious proclamation of the Holy Gospel. In fact, Christ Himself is the food of this wedding, for He is presented to us in the Gospel, which is that He redeemed us from the power of the devil, death, sin, and hell by His suffering and death." (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 336)

³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come.

- In this parable the servants alert everyone that the wedding is now ready. The first servant was John the Baptist, who not only foretold Christ but pointed directly at him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The apostles likewise went out to the Jews who had the Old Testament and should have been prepared for the coming of the Christ, yet the Jews refused to come.

⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast." "

- The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. He never sends just once. More faithful pastors and preachers would go to the Jews and tell them the Christ had come. Here they preach the same sermon Paul does in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.

- Here are two of the three classes of unbelievers who come up in this parable: those who are preoccupied with worldly things, and those who hate the ministers of the Gospel. The world constantly entices Christians away from the wedding supper with trinkets that catch the eye and delight the flesh and in no way nourish either body or soul. And the devil is constantly stirring up enmity toward the Gospel to match his enmity toward Christ. Sometimes the world succeeds in drawing you away, whether it be skipping church while on vacation, or skipping anytime because of a home improvement project or a bed that feels extra comfortable on Sunday morning. Likewise the devil entices you to bristle or lash out at your pastor when he says something that you don't like, in spite of the fact that it is the Word of the Lord.

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⁷ **The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**

- And as it was before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, so it was before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. “The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against His people, until there was no remedy.” (1 Chronicles 36:15-16)
- So also will God treat those who favor the world and the devil over his Son. He gives a feast of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and gives it freely. There is nothing more dangerous than rejecting this. “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)

⁸ **Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.**

- Those invited were not worthy, not because of a lack of good works, but because of a lack of faith. Their preoccupation with the world and hostility toward the Word were symptoms of unbelief.
- Historically speaking this is the call of the Gentiles, the Gospel going out to all nations, the “main roads.”

¹¹ **“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.**

- Here’s the third and final class of unbelievers that comes up in this parable: those who by all appearances are Christians, but who don’t actually have faith in Christ. This happens by coming to church and then not paying attention, being lazy in heeding the Word, thinking you’ve heard it all before, daydreaming, thinking about worldly things that need your attention, walking out the door of the church building and immediately forgetting everything you heard, and so forth.

- “[The Third] commandment] is also violated by that other crowd who listen to God’s Word as they would to any other entertainment, who only from force of habit go to hear the sermon and leave again with as little knowledge at the end of the year as at the beginning.” (*Large Catechism* 1:95-96)

- The wedding garment of faith is a gift from God, not something we have to sew together ourselves.

¹³ **Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’**

- The outer darkness refers to the place where unbelief is punished: the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

¹⁴ **For many are called, but few are chosen.”**

- We should not hear this verse as if being chosen were something entirely different than being called. The only difference between the chosen and those who are not, is the chosen believe the call. And that faith is not their own work, rather, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). That Word of Christ is the Gospel, is the call, is the invitation to the wedding feast.

- Therefore, if you are concerned that you are not one of the chosen (the elect), know that the chosen are chosen through the call of the Gospel. Worldliness, hostility to the Word, and distractedness from the Word plague all Christians because of our sinful flesh. If this cuts you to the heart, the wedding feast is precisely for the purpose of binding up hearts and comforting troubled consciences.

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