

Focus on Matthew 22:1–14

WHAT is important to know?

—From “*Exegetical Perspective*,” Susan Grove Eastman

The parable of the Wedding Banquet is the last of three parables spoken in the temple to the Jewish religious leaders. This, says Jesus, is what the kingdom of heaven is like: the expected guests are absent, and the most unlikely ones are present. Comparison of God’s messianic rule with a great banquet, although not particularly a wedding feast, was familiar in Jewish literature (Psalm 107:1–9; Isaiah 25:6–8). It draws on the practice of ancient kings, who gave banquets for their subjects, and on the image of God as the king who feeds God’s people.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “*Theological Perspective*,” Andrew Purves

The parable carries us into the subtle relationship between the grace of election (all were invited) and the obligations of obedience (to be clothed with Christ, to live in Christ). Grace is freely given, situating us in God’s company by an act of God’s loving election. As a consequence, we are obliged to live as God’s people, according to God’s will for our lives. To do so is to give honor to the king, to God. The failure to do so is to scorn God’s love, God’s choice of us. It is to assert our autonomy, to live in pride, which means that we are found clothed with ourselves rather than with Christ.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*,”
Richard E. Spalding

The crux of the matter—the fault of tenants (Matthew 21:33–46) and the error of the unrobed wedding guest—involves fruitfulness. Gospel living only begins with the invitation. It cannot remain a mere idea; its one essential thing is a transformed life. Though many have been called, the ones who are to be chosen are those who are living in a new way, who have put on life in Christ. Jesus suggests that fruitfulness can indeed be “put on” like a wedding robe—or a baptismal garment—that the outward effects of gospel choices will finally settle in the heart.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “*Homiletical Perspective*,”
Marvin A. McMickle

Within the Christian community there are those members like the ones in the parable who refuse the invitation from God in one way or another. They want the safe, soft side of discipleship, but they shy away from the more difficult work of outreach and social justice. They want blessings from God, but they cannot be found when it is time to share in the work of ministry. God has the authority to bench those who refuse to answer God’s invitation for service. If some are unwilling to accept God’s invitation, then there are others God can invite into divine service.