

The Wedding Garment

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 22, although we'll look to an extent at the rest of the parable as well, and I just focus on these verses 11 and 12.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not owned a wedding garment, and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. This parable Jesus tells in the initial context, the application is, what appeared to be anyway initially, towards the people of Israel, the people of the Jews. Remember that Jesus preached by and large only to a Jewish audience. He himself was the Messiah of Israel. He came to the Jew first, and thereafter, and the message went out to the Gentiles.

He sent his disciples to all nations, but he himself brought the message, the fulfillment of the scriptures to the people of Israel, the people of the Jews. And in the initial context and application, this parable clearly refers to the Jewish people who, having had the intimation of the Lord's coming, his bridegroom coming, they had had the initial invitation which would correspond to that of a wedding banquet in ancient times, when initially, the initial invitation would go out with the servants saying, so-and-so is going to hold a banquet, the king's going to hold this marriage supper, you're invited, and as soon as it's all ready, we'll come and tell you, so be prepared for it so you can lay down your tools and all come as soon as the invitation comes.

[1 : 39] You know it's coming, you know it's going to be ready soon, so make ready. But we read that having received this initial invitation, as it were, or this warning of it, then when the servants were sent forth to call them that were bidden to the wedding, they would not come.

He sent forth other servants saying, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, my fathens are killed, all things are ready, come unto the marriage. And they made the light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. See what is happening here. The contempt with which those who are invited view the invitation, and by extension, the contempt with which they view the king who invites them.

Not only do they not respond to his servants when they come to call to invite them, but when he goes the second mile, is what he sends, other servants send more, so that if they responded at the second calling, then they would be fine, they'd be welcome at the wedding feast.

But no, they don't come to that either. They made the light of it, they scorned it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. Now these are things which are not bad in themselves.

[2 : 54] It's not bad to attend to your fields, and to your beasts, or to your merchandise, to your business. And these things which are the ordinary pursuit of them, would be perfectly normal and worthy things to attend to.

You know, we're meant to labor, to the sweat of our drought, to work for our living. Sometimes, of course, a man can be so intent on securing his living, that he neglects to secure his life.

And this is what we find here. They made light of it. It wasn't important enough to them. What was more important was the day-to-day business, the farm, the beasts, the fields, the merchandise, the business.

That which would feed them for a day, as opposed to the honor of the king. And the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully and soothed.

Now, of course, in the first instance, this applies to the Jewish response to the Old Testament prophets. Most of whom were martyred one way or another. Not all of them, but most of them. Most of them were rejected by their particular current generation.

[4 : 00] Right down, of course, to John the Baptist, the last of the real prophets with a capital P, who himself was martyred, slain by Herod as well. And likewise, when Jesus himself came, they put him to death as well.

This was the standard response of God's chosen people, the Israelites, to God's chosen messengers. But lest we should get all sort of piously self-sufficient and anti-Semitic in our communities, these terrible Jews.

Imagine that. How bad they are at responding to Jesus. Look at the Gentiles. Look at us. And how the vast majority of the Gentiles, likewise, who were invited with the same invitation, likewise, reject it.

Those who are invited to the marriage supper, most think it is more important to focus on the things of the world. They made light of it. And having scorned the king, there is no limit to which they will not go.

It's not enough to hate them. It's not enough to despise them. They must also attack his servants, and treat them spitefully, and kill them. When the king heard that all he was wroth, he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

[5 : 11] Again, we could preach a whole sermon on that alone. We see a fulfillment of this in terms of the Jewish nation with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Within the living memory, of course, of those who would have witnessed it, would be those who could remember Jesus' day a mere 30-odd years previously.

Destroyed their city. Notice it's described as their city, not his city. The king is no more part of it, as it were. It is theirs where rebellion has been, and it is likewise destroyed.

Of course, Jerusalem was completely raised to the ground by the Romans in AD 70. So, in the immediate context, there's a fulfillment there. But also, we see that the king takes notice, not so much of the death fight done to him, of the insult of rejecting his invitation, but rather the deaths of his servants, his martyrs, his children, his prophets, his apostles, his evangelists and missionaries, and so on.

So many of whom have been slaughtered by the enemies of the Lord, particularly increasing numbers in recent years. The king heard thereof. He was wroth. He sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

[6 : 37] So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good. And the wedding was part of their guests. Now, this is what we see.

In obedience to the king, they go out, they do not say, are you a good person? Are you a worthy person? Are you fit to come and sit at the king's table? Oh, maybe you're not.

I better invite somebody else. No, they bring in both bad and good. Those who previously would have had no hope of being invited to the king's table because those initially invited have rejected the invitation, he will have his wedding banquet furnished with guests.

There is a set number of places at the table, and if those who were not invited will not come, those places will be filled with those who will. We've talked in previous days about the fixed number of the elect, that which is known unto God, but it's not known to any of us.

There is a place, every chair at the wedding banquet, the wedding feast of the Lamb, will be filled, and it will be filled with those for whom the Lord has prepared it, but those initially invited may have rejected it.

[7 : 49] But whether they are bad or good or indifferent themselves is neither here nor there. None of those invited guests is worthy to sit at the table.

None of those who have been called would in and of themselves ever normally have received an invitation. But here they are, invited by the servants, bringing in the good, the bad, and the ugly, as it were, and the wedding was furnished with guests.

So far, you would think, so good. But then we have these verses here. When the king came in to see the guests, he saw that a man which had not on a wedding garment.

Now we might think to ourselves, well, that's a bit rough, isn't it? Because, you know, if the poor and those in the hedgerows and the homeless and the destitute and the beggars and so on, how were they meant to have a wedding garment?

How were they meant to be able to have the equivalent of wedding clothes? Now, quite apart from anything else, the custom in those days was that when guests came to such a feast at a king's palace or whatever, they would be given the wedding garment.

[9 : 01] They would be clothed with that which the king would give them. So if they have come in as his guests in response to his invitation, they would be clothed by the servants at the door as they come in.

And there is one there, of course, whom the king sees who does not have such a garment. How did you come in here, friend? Now, something we should notice as well is that the servants themselves do not say, oh, look, there's one we must have missed.

There's one who doesn't have a wedding garment. They might presume that he's with somebody or they might presume, oh, we forgot the given one or they might have any number of thoughts, but they do not themselves presume to weed out this, as it were, gatecrasher.

And we might be thinking, well, how can there be any gatecrasher? Because the king wants to bring in absolutely everybody. He wants to go out to the highways and byways and, as it were, compel them to come in.

How can he then be fussy about who's in and who isn't? Because although he is inviting to his wedding supper, although he is making this marriage supper for his son, that's what it says, verse 2, make a marriage for his son, it is still his feast.

[10 : 20] It is still his banquet, his marriage supper, his party. He says who will be there and who won't be and he clothes them.

So how is there somebody there who is not clothed in the wedding garments? And he said unto him, friend, how cameest thou in hither?

Now, how did you get in? Not who invited you, but how did you come in? Reminded of what Jesus says in John chapter 10, verse 1, verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climb on up some of the way, the same as a thief and a robber.

Now, what does a thief seek to do? He seeks to take that which is not his own and to do it by stealth, to do it as it were, secretly and without the knowledge or the consent of the owner.

The thief may steal and get away with a small amount, whereas somebody who had the courage or the honesty that could go up and say, excuse me, I'm really in need of such and such, would you be able to help me?

[11 : 31] Could you give it to me? Could you lend it to me? And the owner might say, of course, here, take what you need. And the honest person might go away with much more in their hand than the thief who seeks to break through and steal and to rob the legitimate owner.

The reason he goes in some other way is that he seeks to take that which he would have for himself without the consent of the owner, without asking, without the legitimate requesting, without acknowledging the ownership of the one from whom he seeks to receive it.

He seeks rather to take without asking, without acknowledging, without recognizing the ownership of the one from whom he takes it.

Whoever seeks to come in that way is a thief and a robber, Jesus says in John 10. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold that climbeth up some other way the same as a thief and a robber.

And the king says, how did you come in? Which way did you come in? Was it by the door? It was by the door. How come you don't have a wedding garment? Friend, how came a style in heaven not having a wedding garment?

[12 : 44] Now he knows the answer to that. It's like, you know, God's saying, Adam, where are thou? It's not that he doesn't know the answer. It's rather that he is putting the question to him.

The question is almost itself an accusation. But notice the terms in which it is for friends. How came a style in heaven? Remember what Jesus, of course, says to Judas Iscariot when he meets him in the garden a few chapters further on.

And Jesus said unto him, friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came there and laid hands on Jesus and took him. And Judas comes up and greets him and says, hey, my friend, wherefore art thou come?

What does he remember? That means false friend, fake friend, traitor, betrayer, robber, thief. That is the sense of it here. Friend.

How came a style in hither not having a wedding garment? And it is not the servants, as we say, who identify this individual. It is the king himself.

[13:54] Verse 11. When the king came in to see the guests, only the king discerns the true guest from the fake one.

The true invited guest who entered in by the door from the gate crusher. Unless we are prepared to come in on the king's terms, through his door, clothed in his wedding garment, we have no business of this wedding at all.

It is only the king who discerns the true from the false. He saw there a man which had not a wedding garment. And he said to him, friend, how came a style in hither not having a wedding garment?

And he was speechless. Now, if we are clothed by that which the Lord gives, we will not be found naked.

Nor will we be in any sense embarrassed or ashamed. Romans 13, 14. We read, Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts at all.

[15:02] Now, some commentators, of course, have said, Oh, what's the wedding garment here? Well, we understand the wedding garment to be the right spirit in which you come. If you come with suitable humility, or if you come with having prepared your heart beforehand, and a prayerful heart, and so on.

If you come having basically done all the right things, you approach the Lord, you approach his invitation with all humility, and with having put away your sin, and repentance, and all these things. That's true as well, but that's not the primary thing. These will rather be symptoms of having on the proper garment, rather than the garment itself.

I am hesitant to endorse such views, partly because they put our reception, or not at the hands of God, into our own hands.

As long as I'm penitent enough, as long as I have enough faith, as long as I have prepared my heart beforehand, as long as I come in a right spirit of all humility, and all penitence, and so on.

[16:09] That is not our wedding garment. That may be the colors in which it is painted, or adorned, but that is not the garment itself. Romans has it, as we read. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.

That is the garment in which we must be clothed. The Lord Jesus Christ. If ever you forget the reference there, just remember, 13, 14, Romans 13, 14, Battle of Bannockburn, that's nothing compared to this particular victory.

You want something that's going to make your nation proud, and great, and glorious? Never mind the salt high of the apostle. Think on the cross of Christ. Be clothed in his grace, in his mercy. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. Friend, how comeest thou in not having a wedding garment? How can you possibly be at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not clothed in Christ? There is no other way of coming. There is no other means of entering in. Paul writes, of course, the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, chapter 5.

[17:24] We, on verse 4, we that are in this tabernacle be grown, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality, that is death, might be swallowed up of life.

Our desire is to be clothed upon with Christ. Zephaniah, chapter 1, verses 7 and 8, we read, Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God, for the day of the Lord is at hand, for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests, like a wedding banquet, and it shall come to pass 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 strange apparel.

Well, those who show themselves not to be his invited guests, not to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, but with strange apparel.

It means foreign, not that which belongs to us here, just like when the Israelites were castigated for having married strange wives. It didn't mean people of odd character who were a bit strange. It meant foreign, not in the sense of racially different, but foreign in the sense of those who followed other gods, those who were pagans, who acknowledged other gods and tried to put them alongside the God of Israel and make out they're all just the same.

[18:49] They're all just equal. These are my gods, these are your gods, and they're all equivalent. All religions basically the same, no, it isn't. These strange gods, these strange wives, this strange apparel in which these supposed guests are clothed in the prophet Zephaniah, it's that which will

cause them to be destroyed, that which will cause them to be cast out, and it's the same here.

Friend, how famous, not having a wedding garment, and he was speechless. In Isaiah, we read in chapter 61, at verse 10, And I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decked himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

There's so much in this verse here. In the whole sermon, you can make out of this one as well. I rejoice in the Lord, you know, like Paul saying, rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice.

My soul shall be joyful in my God. He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. Salvation? Jehovah is salvation. What does that mean? Jehoshua, Jesus.

[20 : 16] Jehovah is salvation. He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath clothed me with Jesus, with Christ. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.

Remember what Jeremiah says, chapter 23, verse 6, the Lord, our righteousness. It is Christ who alone is our righteousness. It is the breastplate of righteousness which defends us and protects us in the garments of salvation.

Clothe me with the robe of righteousness. Preach ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to go through the lust. As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

They shall be mine, says the Lord in Malachi, in that day when I make up my jewels. A bride is adorned with her jewels. Think also, earlier in that chapter, in verse 3, in that chapter 61 in Isaiah, the Lord said he has to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, beauty in place of ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.

You see, when the Lord clothes us in Christ, it's not, oh well, we've got to follow Jesus and our better obey his rule, better obey his laws, oh well, don't do this, don't do that, don't do the next thing. No, if we are clothed in Christ, we are filled with his joy, with the garment of praise, we delight to do the things the Lord commands us.

[21 : 57] It is our joy, it is our fulfillment, it's our blessedness to live as he would want us to live, to live where he lives, to abide with him, just as if, you know, a young couple fall in love and get married and so on, they want to be where the other one is.

They don't really mind where their jobs will take them or where the new house happens to be or whatever, as long as they're together, as long as they're with one another and we don't mind when the Lord calls us, where he may take us or what he may acquire us, as long as we are with Christ, as long as we are in Christ, as long as this bride is with her bridegroom, she doesn't mind where he takes her or what he commands or requires, it is a joy, it is a delight to fulfill it, to do it because that's what pleases him and we find time and again when we notice young people grow up and end up doing things they swore blind they would never ever do and how is it they end up doing it?

Oh, because so-and-so likes it, so-and-so likes them doing it and they just happen to be in love with so-and-so and so they want to please them so they'll do things that maybe their parents might have been saying for years, wish you would do this, wish you would do that, no, they're not going to do that but so-and-so wants them to do it and so they do it joyfully and they want to please them and all the years of our unconverted life maybe we wouldn't be seen dead in church or maybe we would never turn to the Bible and we wouldn't think of wanting to be in a prayer meaning of a prayer or to seek the Lord and his word and all the boring religious things that old people did never had any interest in them but when we are in Christ when we are clothed with him when we are filled with his love this is the garment of praise in place of the spirit of heaviness the oil of joy in the place of the ashes of mourning which fills us which delights us this guest that is here at this wedding he's not filled with joy he's not bursting with thanksgiving and delight the king says friend how came us down hither not having a wedding garment and he was speechless he has nothing to say that is not the response of the Lord's children

Jesus says to his disciples Luke 21 at verse 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist I will give you a mouth and wisdom what does the Lord say to Moses when he doesn't want to go to Egypt and bring the Israelites back out and he says oh I can't speak I can't talk and the Lord said unto him who hath made man's mouth or who maketh the dumb or deaf or the seeing or the blind have not I the Lord now therefore go and I

will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say I will be with thy mouth I will give you a mouth Jesus says I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say what we find of this so called guest he is speechless he has nothing to say to the king

Eli of course counseled the boy Samuel when he heard the Lord calling him in the temple in the tabernacle Eli said to Samuel go lie down and it shall be if he call thee that thou shalt say speak Lord for thy servant hearth so Samuel went to me down in his place and the Lord came and stood and called as at other times Samuel Samuel then Samuel answered speak for thy servant hearth and then once the Lord had spoken to him and he was filled with that matter with that news and it was heavy it was serious the message that he had we did a look further on Eli says to him what is the thing that the Lord hath said to me I pray he hid it not from me God do so to me and Lord also thou hide anything from me of all the things that he said unto me what did we find Samuel speechless is he struck dumb no Samuel told him every whit and hid nothing from him and he said it is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good

[26 : 25] Eli the priest of God for all that he was not firm with his own sons for all that he spoiled them and put them before the Lord and he allowed them to run riot and commit gross sin yet he himself had that measure of grace and faith in his own heart albeit he was unable to bring his children under control or unwilling to do so yet he recognizes when it is the Lord speaking through even this child Samuel he says it is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good he knows the Lord when the Lord speaks even through the mouth of the child and so likewise the Lord knoweth them that are his when his servants are asked by the king to give a reason of the hope that is in them he gives them a mouth he enables them to answer saying thus and thus that the Lord dealt with my soul but he was speechless friend out came the standing hither not having a wedding ground and he was speechless then said the king to the servants bind him hand and foot take him away and cast him into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth now binding hand and foot of course was simply a way in which people were tied up in olden days but there's also a message here a symbolic message here if you're bound by the hands it means you can do nothing with your hands anymore there is no more work that you can do you are bound by the hand if you're bound by the foot there is nowhere that you can go there's nowhere that you can walk there's nowhere you can run you are bound hand and foot you're a prisoner in every sense of the word into outer darkness is that implied there's inner darkness and then an outer darkness is there is there grades and stages of darkness well perhaps there is but I would suggest to you that the fact that the darkness is outer darkness it is darkness precisely because it is on the outside of the Lord's light and glory and grace we read in

Revelation 22 verse 15 he talks about the holy city and he says without outside are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie in other words it is the antithesis of the one who is the light of the world and the truth of God whosoever loveth and maketh a lie dogs sorcerers whoremongers murderers remember what the king did to the murderers of the servants and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie idolaters those who put other gods alongside the true God or in place of the true God out of darkness where the Lord would gather his children in to the marriage supper none of them are worthy none of them perhaps would have been the kind of people that would be invited normally to go out into the highways and byways and gather together all as many as they found both bad and good their presence at the marriage supper was not because of their personal character or virtues but simply from the fact that the king wanted to gather them in the wedding was furnished with guests and when the king came in to see the guests not the servants but the king he saw there a man which had not on a wedding ground lest he be clothed with

Christ put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ 13 14 remember it clothed in Christ not that we desire to be unclothed but clothed upon that is our wedding garment that is our protection it is our honor it is our glory it is the grace the Lord gives us without it we are not simply naked and ashamed perhaps worse we are clothed in what we think is our own goodness we think we can mingle with the true guests we think nobody will see us we think we can hide like Adam and Eve in the garden but the Lord sees all things the king decides between the true and the false and the king why don't we have on the wedding garment because we have climbed up some other way because we have sought instead of receiving with open and empty hands from the king who desires to give freely and graciously we have desire to steal we have desire to be a thief or a robber what's the benefit to us because that way we get to obtain something of which we do not have ownership this man is quite

happy to sit down and stuff his face at the banquet he is quite happy to fill his belly with the marriage supper but he is not going to acknowledge the king he is not going to acknowledge the sonship and the reason why he is invited or those who are true guests are invited he wants it on his terms rather than the king's terms if we would come at all we must come through Christ if we would come at all we must come by the door if we would come at all we must come in response to the king's invitation there is one way and one way only to be saved and there is one garment and one garment only which is the garment of praise and which will clothe us and fit us for the true marriage supper and when he said to him how did you come in without a wedding garment he was speechless he had nothing to say friend if we are to respond to the Lord of his grace and his invitation somewhere along the line we must find or be found within ourselves something to say something to testify to what the Lord has done in our lives a reason for the hope that is in us our tongues must be loosed as remember Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man how he unstopped his ears and the string of his tongue was loosed and he was able to speak clearly that the Lord would give us a mouth that the Lord would be with man's mouth and be word and matter unto us and enable us to testify what he has done for our souls we dare not be speechless when we ask the reason of the hope that was within us we cannot be as dumb guests at the banquet but rather we must be enabled to say I'm here because I was invited how did you have a wedding gown well I came in by the door right enough it must have been an oversight oh sure enough right here you are no bother the Lord desires all his guests to be clothed and to be clothed upon with his son's righteousness he would not seek to turn away but nor will he be dishonoured by those who would dishonour his son and seek to be clothed by any other means if he would have Christ he must acknowledge him if he would respond to the king a string of our tongue must be raised and the [34 : 00] Lord has promised not only that he will give us the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness and sorrow and uncertainty and anxiety that no doubt was our case before when we are clothed in Christ we are clothed with the garment of praise and he will be unto us he will give us a mouth and wisdom whereby we may speak whereby we may testify and say what the Lord has done for my soul let's pray that it was there before make that Ford and will the pole because the gentle power will spread and will six the