
Yes and Amen

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 11 October 2026

Philippians 4:1-9 • Matthew 22:1-14



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

The parable of the wedding banquet is a pretty clear story of encouragement for us, to listen for and respond to God's invitation. We are invited to a banquet — not just a meal, but a banquet. There will be rich and delicious food, wonderful drinks and wine, savoury and sweet treats, and plenty of everything — all we can eat! That is the kingdom of heaven to which we are invited. God will provide abundantly, as only God can. Hard to imagine that anyone would say no to it. Yet all the invited guests fail the king, and go about their own business. Without loading down the story too much, looking for parallels, it's clear that we are invited, all of us, and it is up to us to accept.

But if we don't accept — ? Those in the parable not only refused to come but killed the messengers who came to repeat the invitation. Jesus was sending a

message to those Jews — the “scribes and Pharisees” — who disregarded and killed God’s prophets when they, the prophets, delivered their message about him, Jesus. Elsewhere, Jesus accuses them in these words: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” (Matthew 23:37). We do not want to be classed with the scribes and Pharisees. Yet, in all honesty, those who have not accepted Jesus, several billion of them, may face the same fate, if they don’t repent. This is the clear message of the Bible.

God is all about invitation, and the beginning of this particular invitation is back in the Old Testament, with God bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. Through Moses, he invited them to a life beyond the hard, soul-crushing work they were forced into by Pharaoh. They would have a new life under their God. The bounty promised them was new land — God said:

I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
(Exodus 3:7-8)

Milk and honey were the luxuries they would enjoy, if they followed God. Of course this was a metaphor for a life of ease. It was to be a life of freedom from fear and want. They had only to accept it. Many of the Israelites did accept it, and kept the promise with God. But so many went astray after other gods. They mixed with the other peoples of the region, which God had forbidden them to do. They set up altars to the local pagan gods. Many were punished with exile or death. It often seems as if the Israelites were incapable of following God.

The long history of the Jewish people, through the Old Testament and right up into the New, is one of faith, betrayal, repentance, and faith again. Time and time again God showed them faith and love, time and again they rejected it. Then they were punished, God forgave them, took them back again, and the cycle repeated. And then God sent his Son, the last of the prophets. It reminds me of last week’s parable of the vineyard, where God is represented as saying, “Surely they will respect my Son.”

Some did respect Jesus; many did not. God’s invited guests, his chosen people, the Jews, did not come to the banquet. So what does the king do? He invites other people, everyone the slaves can find, and brings them to the table as well. And that’s where the Gentiles come in. We are the ones who were once outside in the dark and cold; but when Jesus said that salvation is for all, not just the Jews, we joined the feast. God did not completely abandon the Jews, for they are still the people he brought up out of slavery, his chosen people of all the peoples in the world. God widened the net, grew the promise to include all his

peoples. In truth, God's people always included all the people he created, as all people were created by him. God always welcomed the stranger, and taught the Israelites to do the same. Any person, of whatever tribe or people, could know the bounty of God by acknowledging God's sovereignty. It was always an individual choice a person had to make. So the inclusion of the Gentiles in the spreading of the Gospel was a new thing for the Jews, but not for God. And it was difficult for many Jews to accept, as we see in the arguments between Peter and Paul in the early days of the church, in the time chronicled in the Book of Acts. And it was new for the Gentiles, as they began answering the call of the Gospel.

Not only are we invited by God, but God doesn't give up on us easily. The guests in the parable have three chances to come to the banquet. They receive the initial invitation, and two lots of slaves are sent out to remind them. Surely if he invites them three times, they would come? But they do not, and they lose their chance forever. This theme of invitation and of being ready to respond to God goes through several parables. It is a feature of God's plan, in which Jesus will return, but we don't know when. We are to be ready and not slow about our response.

And the only possible response really is a big "Yes!" And an "Amen."