

“THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS”

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**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The wedding was furnished with guests.”
Matthew 22:10.*

OUR discourse will follow the lines of the parable. A king desired to honor his son right royally. He loved his son well, for he deserved richly of him, and therefore, as the most fitting time had come, he resolved to honor him. His son was about to take to himself a spouse; should not his marriage, which is a great event in life, be celebrated with honor? The father determined to honor his son on the joyful occasion by inviting a large number of guests to a sumptuous banquet. Not by the infliction of pain, or the pressure of taxation, but by liberality and festivity, would the king honor the Crown Prince. It should be an extraordinary feast. Surely, it would be the simplest thing in the world to gather together a grateful company of guests. One would expect a competition for admission; everybody in the royal domain would eagerly ask for an invitation. But it fell out otherwise; there was a disloyal feeling abroad and it now expressed itself, those who were bidden would not come, and means had to be used to secure the result spoken of in the text, so that “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

The parable is plain. The great Father delights to honor Jesus, his Only-begotten Son. The Father loves the Son, with whom He is one. The Son has deserved well at the Father’s hands, for He has been “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It is the Father’s aim in the work of grace to glorify His Son, who, as God and man in one nature, is the channel of grace to fallen men. He proposes to do this now that the Lord Jesus takes His church into marriage union with Himself. The incarnate God calls a chosen company, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, and celebrates thus early in the day this happy union by a wedding breakfast, to which He invites multitudes to come. It is a feast of mercy, grace, and peace; a marriage feast of delight and joy. The feast is for the glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very special manner. Can any of us measure the glory which comes to our Lord Jesus by His union with the church? Angels, and principalities, and powers, intelligences now existing, and all intelligences yet to be created, will wonderingly gaze upon the riches of His inheritance in the saints. What a spectacle is this! The Word made flesh that He might dwell among us! Immanuel, God with us, taking unto Himself a company of chosen men, to be one with Him forever. In the union of Christ and His church all wisdom centers, all grace shines forth. “The excellency of our God” is to be seen in the salvation of the elect and the joining of them unto the Christ. Our glorious Second Adam was like the first Adam in the garden, for whom no helpmeet was found. Neither cherubim, nor seraphim, angels nor spirits, could be fit companions for Him. He says, “My delights were with the sons of men.” He willed that His chosen church should stand to Him in the same relation as Eve stood to Adam, to be the solace of His heart and the rest of His love. He chose men to be His companions, His friends, His joy, His crown.

One would have thought that every man hearing that manhood was thus to be honored by union with Godhead would flock towards the marriage feast. It would have seemed certain that all would desire to know this heavenly mystery, and as soon as they knew it, would press forward to be partakers in its bliss. Alas! This is not the case, and this morning my business is to tell you the story of how the purpose of divine love appeared in peril, but how, in the end, it is accomplished, and, according to the language of the text, “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

I. Our first point is, that IT SEEMED AS IF NONE WOULD COME. The wedding feast was prepared; oxen and fatlings were killed, all things were ready, but where were the guests?

Those first invited, and naturally expected, would not come. Previous notice had been given them of the festival, and afterwards a summons had been sent to say that the hour was come, but, instead of joyfully responding, they would not come.

These were, first of all, the Jews, to whom the gospel had been given by the law and the prophets long beforehand. “He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.” Israel was not gathered; few out of the chosen nation recognized the Messiah. He came with a feast of mercy for them, but they would have none of it. He called, and they refused.

Today this same class will be found among the children of godly parents, dedicated from their birth, prayed for by loving piety, listening to the gospel from their childhood, and yet unsaved. We look for these to come to Jesus. We naturally hope that they will feast upon the provisions of grace, and like their parents will rejoice in Christ Jesus, but, alas, how often it is the case they will not come! Some such are here this morning. We greatly grieve over you. You do not choose your father’s God, nor accept your mother’s Savior. Ah me! If *you* will not come, who will? If you, who are taught concerning salvation by grace, yet refuse it, how can we wonder that the children of the godless and the profane reject our message? Who will come if you will not?

Dear hearers, some of you are not privileged with godly parents, but you have been for many years willing listeners to the Word of life, and yet you do not accept Christ Jesus as yours, nor accept the provisions of His grace. You do not joy with Him in His union with His chosen, for you do not love Him. How sad this is! Well may the dispirited preacher mourn, and fear in his heart that the great festival of love will prove a failure! If such as you are will not come, how will the wedding be furnished with guests?

The outlook grew worse still when *they came not though they were reasoned with*. When they would not come, the king sent other servants to bring them to a better mind, and this was the form of His reasoning, “Behold, I have prepared My dinner, My oxen and My fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage.” No kinder argument could have been used, there was an appeal to all that was noble in them, and had they been worthy they would have come at once. I can well understand that the servants would repeat their lord’s message with special eagerness, as they thought of His waiting in the palace, and watching for the guests. They would cry to those who hesitated, “You have waited long enough, come at once. The marriage cannot be delayed, why should *you* delay? Tarry no longer. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Still they made light of it. When you have been invited to Jesus many a time, when tearful earnestness has pleaded with you, and yet men of God have had to return to their Master, saying, “Who has believed our report?” it becomes a sorrowful business, and our anxious fears cannot see how the wedding will be furnished with guests. This would have been an overwhelming surprise to us if Jesus had not declared of men in His own day, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” If they refused His pleadings, we cannot wonder that they reject our sayings. Still it is a mournful fact, that “Many are called, but few chosen.”

The case looks darker still when we notice that, *though reasoned with by new messengers, they did not come*. It is said, “He sent forth other servants.” I tell you from my very soul that, if my Lord will only bring you to the banquet of His grace, I mind not who shall be the successful messenger. If you will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life through what I have to say, may the Lord remove me, and send someone else, to whom He will give power by His grace to reach your hearts. I shall be glad to remain in this pulpit for years to come, but not at the cost of a single soul, if somebody else can preach to you more efficiently, if someone else can get at your hearts better than I have done, may the Lord allow me to retire for your good! Do you wish it? “He sent other servants.” A preacher may be too rhetorical; let a plain-speaking person be tried. He may be too weighty; let another come with parable and anecdote. Alas! With some of you the thing wanted is not a new voice, but a new heart. You would listen no better to a new messenger than to the old one. After so many good men and true have spoken, after Paul and Apollos, and Cephas have all failed, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

If you look at *the various characters that would not come*, you will see more and more cause for sorrow. Of some we simply read that “*they would not come*.” They made no excuses or apologies, but curtly said they would not come. That was the end of the matter. Many dismiss the gospel at once; they are not to be reasoned with; they do not want it and will not have it. A large class of the community has heard of the way of salvation, but they care nothing for it. It is not with them lack of information, but want of inclination. They have neither mind nor will for heavenly things.

A second class made light of it. They were indifferent to royal honors and duties. They were taken up with the care of what they had in possession, and went their way, each man to his farm, saying, “I have worked hard to get my farm, and I cannot afford to let it lie idle.” Another was taken up with the care of getting an estate, and went to his merchandise, saying, “I have nobody to keep my shop. I must mind the main chance. If you do not look alive, everybody will run over you. I must attend to my buying and my selling.” The worldly-wise make up a very numerous class. The rich man cannot be religious, his position in society prevents it; the poor man cannot mind the things of God, he is worn out by earning his daily bread. Thus they all make excuse. Lord, when so many are unwilling, and so many more are occupied with other things, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

A third class was violently opposed; they would not be bothered, they had no patience with religious cant; they “took His servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them.” These are not as numerous as the others, but yet they are found among us. Skeptics, swearers, revilers of godliness, and “modern thought” men; these revile the cross, and are ferocious against the gospel. When we see these raging, we are apt to ask very mournfully—How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The most dreadful thought of all remains; *some of the invited had already perished.* The king in His wrath sent His troops and slew the murderers of His messengers, and burned their city. While I have been preaching, many of my hearers have died. Where are they now? If they died without Christ they are now past hope. Ah me! They can never enter now, for the door is shut. If they died in their sins, they are in the outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you think of it, this is a dark prospect. Men are dying, dying without hope, and those who are yet alive are resolved to perish in like manner, for they are earnestly invited to the feast of love, but they refuse to come. How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The King tells us the real reason why they would not come; *they were not worthy.* Those who were invited specially, and about whom there was the greatest hope, had nothing in them to encourage that hope; they were not loyal, they were not kind-hearted, they were not honest, they were not worthy, else they would have come to do honor to the Son of their King. Their not coming revealed the enmity of their hearts. It was a wretched way of showing their spite to the Prince upon His wedding day. It is horrible that men refuse Christ and heaven out of enmity to God. Rejecters of Christ are unworthy of pardoning grace, unworthy of a dying Savior, unworthy of those marriage bonds into which Jesus enters with believing hearts. They are not worthy in the gospel sense of worthiness, and of course they were far less worthy in a legal sense.

The most mournful spectacle in the world is a heart which refuses the mercy of God. Objection is sometimes made to the doctrine of *total* depravity. I do not know what adjective can be too strong to describe human depravity when I perceive that it refuses God under His loveliest aspect; God in the greatness of His love, God sparing not His own Son. If men turn away from God in anger I can understand it, if men turn aside from God in justice I can understand it, but when they so hate God that they will not even have His salvation, when they refuse pardon through the precious blood of Christ, when they will sooner be damned than reconciled to God, this shows that their heart is desperately wicked. The cross rejected is the clearest proof of the heart depraved. There I leave this mournful subject, and go a step further. Certainly it did seem as if the wedding would not be furnished with guests.

II. Secondly, IT WAS A MOURNFUL PROSPECT. Imagine that there had been no guests at the wedding feast; what then?

First, *it would have been greatly to the King’s dishonor.* The Crown Prince is married, and nobody comes to the wedding! The feast is free, costly, plentiful, but nobody will come to it. What an insult! The banquet hall is lighted, and the minstrels are in their place, but no eyes or ears are charmed. Oxen and fatlings make the tables groan, but none are there to make the hall resound with shout and song. What a wretched spectacle! Empty halls, unfurnished benches, meat untasted carried out to the dogs! History does not record a more deliberate and unmistakable insult. Let me translate the parable. If no souls are saved, if the great plan of redemption does not save, what a farce the whole business will be! What a dishonor to the name of the great God! Look at the supposition, that you may see the impossibility of it. Think for an instant of a defeated, disappointed, dishonored Jehovah! Can it be? And yet, if the wedding had not been furnished with guests, the king would have been disappointed and insulted in the

tenderest point. If the chosen are not saved, if men are not brought to Christ, then the glorious name of the God of grace is dishonored. Do you think it can be so?

In the next place, suppose none had come to the wedding feast; then *the king's son would have been grieved*. His wedding and nobody there! If it were your own, perhaps you could put up with it, for you do not stand in so public a position as the king's son, and you have not provided so vast a banquet. But the king's son! Only imagine that it is his wedding-day, and the servants are mustered in the hall, but not a single guest arrives. He has no one to congratulate him upon the happy day, no one to wish him well, no one to welcome the bride. Now, the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ; if He dies, and men do not believe in Him; if He rises again, and men do not accept Him; if He enters heaven as a Prince and a Savior, and yet no one receives repentance and remission, where is His honor? Where is His glory? Look at the dreadful supposition, and think whether it can be. I am sure, as you gaze upon it, you will say, “Impossible! A bleeding Savior cannot die in vain. Our Christ could not in death have paid down the ransom price for nothing. He could not have stood a substitute for men, and yet see men lost after all!”

If no guests had arrived, *how disappointed would the Bride have been!* She, too, would have had to share in the failure of the day. Her wedding would not have been remembered with pleasure. She would have been happy in the bridegroom, but also unhappy because of the unkindness shown to Him. In vain her rich apparel, and her costly ornaments, for there are no eyes to gaze upon them. If souls are not saved the church misses her greatest joy. When men believe in Jesus, how delighted we are! Our hearts leap for joy when men repent. But if sinners are not saved, if the preaching of the gospel is in vain, if they will not come to Christ, then are saints full of heaviness, and the church cries out in her anguish, “Have you forgotten to be gracious?”

Had none come to the marriage feast, *a store of provisions would have been wasted*. The King says, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed.” See the bullocks roasting whole! See yonder fatted calf killed for the feast! Mark how the sheep are led to the slaughter! All this will remain untasted. Yonder dainty dishes, and flowing bowls, and luscious fruits will have none to enjoy them. It will be a wretched business, indeed! I want you to look at the dreadful picture till it vanishes out of sight. Can it be that Jesus has made Himself the heavenly bread, and none will feed on Him, or at the best a very few? Can it be that He has provided a robe of righteousness, and nobody will wear it? Is heaven prepared, and will it remain half occupied? I do but suppose it for the moment, to make you see what a melancholy fact a failure in the scheme of mercy would be.

Would it not have meant, also, *the enemy's triumph?* The king's foes would have heard of it, and laughed Him to scorn. At a royal wedding He could not command guests! How they would scoff at His wasted provision! “Ha, ha! Ha, ha!” The story would have been told on every ale-bench. The sons of Belial would make rare mirth of it. The King, the Prince, the Bride would all have been ridiculed, because of a wedding in empty halls, a feast with phantom guests! I do not believe that God intends to let Satan triumph in this way. I cannot imagine that He will allow the powers of darkness thus to open their wicked mouths against Him. If free will refuses the gift of God, free grace will come in and win the day. I have shown you already how free will threatens to empty the banqueting hall, and dishonor the King, the Son, and the Bride, and if the business had been left to the free will of man, this is the result which would have come of it; a God dishonored, and men preferring to die rather than accept life through Jesus Christ. Then it could never have been said that “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

III. Let us go a step further and notice that in the parable THIS CATASTROPHE WAS GRACIOUSLY PREVENTED. “The wedding was furnished with guests.”

We are very much in the same case today as the servants were in when the invited ones would not come. We preach and teach the gospel but we have to complain that so many will not come to the banquet of grace. God gives us many souls, but not so many as we desire. We are eager for many more, and we begin to be afraid lest, after all, God should not be glorified as we wish that He should be. In the parable an unfurnished banquet was prevented, and so it will be in the reality. How was the calamity averted?

It was prevented, first, by *a fuller invitation*. At first the heralds only called those who had been previously bidden, a sort of aristocracy of hopeful persons. As these would not come, we read, “Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage.” They went out, not to a

select band, but to all whom they might find. Brethren, it is a grand thing when we get a clearer idea of what the gospel really is. The more evangelical our notions become, so that we are prepared to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven and to say, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” the more we may hope for large success. If, by my preaching, I lead a man to look at himself, to see whether there is anything in him which entitles him to believe, I practically hide the gospel from him. If I preach up character unduly, so that the man mainly inquires whether he has that character, I fix his eye upon himself, and this is not what I should aim at. If I go forth and gather together as many as I find both good and bad, then their thoughts are on the banquet rather than on themselves. We want men to look to Jesus, and therefore we cry, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” When we get upon clear gospel lines, and keep there, we may expect to see the arm of the Lord revealed, and the wedding furnished with guests.

Again, *the invitation was now given more publicly*. They had simply gone to the houses of the invited guests, and said, “All things are ready; come.” But now the servants go to the chief places of con-course, and they cry aloud, and spare not among the crowds of men. One has gone to the market, another is preaching where four ways meet. Hark to the voice of one upon the village green, and to the songs of others as they traverse the back slum. You cannot now go along a street without hearing the news of the great wedding feast. Many will be brought in when many are eager to bring them in. God is pleased to acknowledge the means which He has Himself ordained. The more constant and public the proclamation of the gospel becomes, the more numerous will men be saved through the Spirit of God. Then is the set time to favor Zion come. We are not to hide our lamp under a bushel. He that knows the gospel should speak it out as plainly as he can, and let his voice be as the silver trumpets of jubilee, that every ear may hear. It came to pass that the king’s message was more widely made known, and thus “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

Another matter assisted; *the servants were now thoroughly zealous*. I am sure I should have felt dreadfully agitated to see all those provisions and none coming to eat them. Think of the halls decorated, the cooks working day and night, the big fires burning, bullocks roasting, the wines on the lees set opened, and yet no guests. It would have worried me greatly, and you too. You would have said, “It cannot be, it must not be, we cannot bear it. The king, how sad He must feel! The good prince, how bitter it is for him! The dear bride, what must be her sadness when this great insult is put upon her? Here, I must fetch in some guests, or die in the attempt.” I am sure we should have traveled six ways at once if we could; we should have invited with a thousand mouths if possible. Getting hold of one man’s coat and of another man’s sleeve, we should have compelled them to come in. This, also, is the Lord’s way of blessing men. He awakens His own people, makes them sorrowful for the sins of the times, and then they grow earnest and troubled, and so they lay themselves out to snatch men as brands from the burning. “As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” The want of travailing causes the absence of conversion. When we begin to sigh and cry, and mourn, because the ways of God are forsaken, then our earnestness moves the heart, both of God and man, and the guests come to the wedding.

Again, the calamity of a wedding without guests was prevented by *a certain secret power which went with the messengers*. We read that they “gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good.” They did not merely invite them, but they gathered them in. Now people are not to be gathered in great numbers all of a sudden, and led to a feast by mere words. Words are but air. There is nothing in our words to make men come to Jesus unless the Lord works by them. Yet the guests did come in shoals. An influence went with the words of those servants which drew the people together, they could not wish to stay away; they came gladly. Their wills were sweetly inclined, and they thronged the palace. Beloved, all the hope of our ministry lies in the Spirit of God operating upon the spirits of men. I want all the members of this church to feel this more deeply and practically than ever. Do not put trust in the preacher; if he happens to be away, do not think that God is tied to him. Look for a blessing upon the gospel itself whoever preaches it. If the Holy Spirit is with us we shall see thousands flocking to Jesus. No sinner will ever come to Christ apart from the quickening, enlightening, drawing, converting power of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally exercised upon the conscience and heart. Let us believe this, and next, let us be assured that the Spirit of God is with us, and let us then go forth with all boldness. To the street

corner, the cottage, the lodging house, the wayside, let us go forth and publish abroad the invitation of the great King, “My oxen and My fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”

Thus you have seen the outward means by which the Holy Spirit brings men to Jesus, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that **IN THE END THE FEAST WAS A GLORIOUS SUCCESS.** “The wedding was furnished with guests.” Guests are a part of the furniture of a wedding feast. You may pile on your gold and silver plates, hang up your banners, load your tables, and sound your music, but if you have no guests the feast is a failure. It is our solemn conviction that the Lord our God has never failed yet, and that He never will fail. We believe that the Lord’s eternal purpose will stand, and that He will do all His pleasure. We believe in no blind fate, but we trust in a predestination which is full of eyes, and which accomplishes its purpose to the least jot and tittle. God’s greatest work is redemption; will He fail in it? Salvation is the focus of His glory; shall this be frustrated? If God were to fail in connection with the cross, it would be a failure indeed; God would be dishonored, and His crown jewels cast into the mire. But it shall not be.

Turn to the parable, and we find *there were sufficient guests*, “the wedding was furnished with guests.” There were as many guests as were necessary to the honor of the King, and His Son, and His Bride. Oh yes, in the gathering up and consummation of all things, the wedding of the Lord Jesus will be amply furnished with guests, “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” There will be no disappointment to Christ at the last great day. Satan may whisper disaster and disappointment to us at this hour, and for the moment it may seem as if the forces of darkness triumphed, but the end is not yet. The will of God, so full of grace and mercy, shall be accomplished, the preparations of grace shall be used, and the purpose of love fulfilled. As the wedding was furnished with guests so shall heaven be filled with “a number which no man can number.”

The feast was more of a success than it would have been had there been no opposition. *The persons who came to the wedding were more grateful* than the first invited might have been if they had come. The richer sort had a good dinner every day. Those farmers could always kill a fat sheep, and those merchants could always buy a calf. “Thank you for nothing,” they would have said to the king if they had accepted His invitation. But these poor beggars picked off the streets, had not tasted meat for months. Their half-starved bodies welcomed the fatlings. How glad they were! One of them said to the other, “It’s a long time since you and I sat down to such a roast as this,” and the other answered, “I can hardly believe that I am really in a palace dining with a king. Why, yesterday I begged all the day, and only had two pence at night. Long live the king, say I, and blessings on the prince and His Bride!” I warrant they were thankful for such a feast. They said it was an ill wind that blew nobody any good; because their betters had refused to come, there was now room for them. When the Lord saves great sinners, such as you and me, He wins warm hearts for Himself. When the Lord saves unlikely ones, He gets unusual thankfulness. When He brings in the drunkard and the profane, the unclean and the hardened, and makes them pure, and holy, and puts them among the children, what gratitude He gets! The Pharisee may ask Christ to a cold dinner, but it is the woman that was a sinner who will wash His feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. If some of you moralists get saved—and God grant you may!—you will never prize the precious blood so much as those do who are washed by it from foulest stains.

The joy that day was much more expressed than it would have been had others come. Those ladies and gentlemen, who were first invited, if they had come to the wedding, would have seated themselves there in a very stiff and proper manner. Dear me, what a fine thing propriety is! And yet, what a dead thing it is! One said to me the other day, “I have gone to my place of worship for many years, and nobody ever did speak to me that I know of, and nobody ever will, for we are all too respectable to know one another.” You know the dignified style of self-satisfied people. Among such there is no cordiality, no freshness, no sweet naturalness. Did you ever attend a breakfast or a dinner of beggars? Did you ever see a company of very hungry people feeding to their heart’s content? They make a merry clatter, they are not muzzled by propriety, they are glad at the sight of every dish. They look at the waiters as angels, and when the hurrahing comes to be done, you admire the strength of their lungs. The dull monotony of respectability knows no joy like that which comes to poverty when it feasts to the full at the table of bounty. The Crown Prince was happier that day among His poor subjects than He would have been

among the grandees and the fashionables. Those paupers, those laborers, those tramps, those hedge-birds, those were the fellows to make merry. To whom much is forgiven, the same loves much. Up in Heaven they sing like the voice of many waters and like great thunder, because they have been cleansed from many sins and have partaken of great grace. Let the Pharisee and the moralist, refuse the gospel; there are those about who, in accepting it, will do it greater honor than those dull souls could ever render to it. Thus the wedding was furnished with guests, who expressed their joy enthusiastically.

How the provisions were relished! It does one good to see a hungry man eat his food. To him even every bitter thing is sweet. He does not turn over his food and cut off every little bit of gristle, as some of you do because of your delicate appetites. The true gospel hearer hearkens to the text—“Eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” He does not act the critic, and quibble at this expression and that. He is too sharp-set to be particular about the dishes and the carving. We marvel sometimes at the capacity of hungry men, there is no end to it, and it is the same with spiritual as with natural hunger. I think I can tell what happened at that wedding; the Bride nudged the Bridegroom and said, “See these poor people eat! Is it not a pleasure to give one’s oxen and fatlings where they are so much needed?” The Bridegroom was as happy as He could be, for He was of a sympathizing heart, and He greatly rejoiced in the joy of the poor people around Him. The king Himself that day was gladdened as He saw what a gallant company of trenchermen they were, and how there was no bickering, nor finding fault, but only unbroken enjoyment and gratitude. The choicest kind of guests had been collected if the object was to give joy. Ah, dear friends! If you have a deep sense of sin, you will greatly love free grace and dying love. This is the lack of certain gentlemen who are always finding fault with the gospel, they never knew their own state by nature and by practice, and therefore they do not prize salvation. If they had felt a few lashes of the ten-thronged whip of the law upon their bare consciences, they would relish gospel forgiveness far more. He that has been in the prison of conviction prizes blood-bought freedom. He that has felt the chains of sin values the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. So I say that inasmuch as these poor creatures were brought in from the streets, and their splendid appetites enjoyed the feast, the wedding festival was no failure, but all the greater success, because of the king’s enemies. The wedding was furnished with guests—guests who enjoyed the abundance provided by the King.

Certainly, *the occasion became more famous* than it would otherwise have been. If the feast had gone on as usual it would have been only one among many such things, but now this royal banquet was the only one of its kind, unique, unparalleled. To gather in poor men off the streets, laboring men and idle men, bad men and good men, to the wedding of the Crown Prince—this was a new thing under the sun. Everybody talked of it. There were songs made about it, and these were sung in the king’s honor where none honored kings before. In the kitchens, among the servants, this was a fine story to tell by the fireside, while Mary and Jane wished they had been there to see. In every lodging house for years to come this would be the favorite story—the tale of the poor man’s prince, and the needy man’s queen. On the exchange and in the market men talked of the brave bride and bridegroom who had defied the customs of fashion, and had done a deed so daring in its goodness. Was ever such a thing heard of before? Here was a feast for men who never feasted before! Sensible men said, “And nothing could be better, they were feeding those that wanted feeding, they were giving good cheer to those who have little enough of it.” Among the poor themselves the Prince’s name was very famous, while the portrait of the Princess was nailed up over the mantel. Children said to one another, “My father went to the wedding of the imperial prince.” To many it seemed like a story out of the Arabian Nights. It did not read like a piece of common history at all, but like a fairy tale of the age of gold. Dear friends, when the Lord saved some of us by His grace, it was no common event. When He brought us great sinners to His feet, and washed us, and clothed us, and fed us, and made us His own, it was a wonder to be talked of forever and ever. We will never leave off praising His name throughout eternity. That which looked as though it would defame the King turned out to His honor, and “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

One thing more; *the king’s liberality was all the better seen*. If those who were first bidden had put in an appearance, they would have come arrayed in their own scarlet and fine linen. Some of the gentlemen would have bought a new suit on purpose. You may depend upon it, all the cunning women in the city, would have been employed to get their ladyships ready for the banquet, that they might have honor

in the court that day. Now these fine clothes would have been more for the glory of those who came in them, than for the honor of the King. There was nothing of this among those who were gathered from the highways. They were in sorry gear. It was difficult, perhaps, in some cases, to tell which the original stuff of their garments was, so patched and mended they were. Anyhow, they were a ragged regiment, and what was the consequence? Why, then they must all be dressed in the Prince’s own livery, and all the glory of their apparel must be unto Him. He said to His servants, “Go to My wardrobe. Bring forth changes of raiment.” Everyone that came in to the feast was invited to put on the king’s wedding garments. When He came in to see the guests, it was a grand sight, for everybody was royally arrayed. The king’s wedding robes were much better than His subjects’ best suits. It was a grand sight to see so many all in one royal livery, every guest wearing the uniform of mercy. So is it with us poor sinners, saved by grace. If we had possessed any true righteousness of our own we should have worn it, but now we count our own righteousness, but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him. His righteousness decorates all the saints; they could not be better arrayed. Thus is the feast made more glorious than it otherwise would have been and the wedding is furnished with guests.

How I wish that I could gather in many this morning, both bad and good! I mean by good, those who are comparatively so as to their moral conduct. You are bidden to come to the wedding feast of love. But even if you are bad, and obliged to own that you are so, I am equally anxious to gather you in to the feast. Do you ask me: What are we to do? What were these persons to do? To come just as they were, and freely receive what the king had freely provided. Sometimes at our treats for Sunday school children, every child is told to bring his own mug and plate, but it is not so with our great King. His banquet is too royal for that. You are to bring nothing. Still, everybody must go home and wash, must he not? No, the washing and the clothing shall all be done for you at the King’s palace. Come as you are. “But what do you mean by coming?” We mean trusting; trust your soul with Jesus Christ, and He will save you. Trust Him, and you shall know that He died in your room, place, and stead, so that, believing in Him, you shall not perish but have everlasting life. May the Holy Spirit lead you to believe in Jesus, that is, trust Him.

I have told you the gospel and the whole of it. Trust the crucified Savior, and you shall live. Jesus says, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Do not look within to see what is there, but look to Jesus hanging on the cross. A look at Christ crucified will save you. Look, dear girls, young as you are, look to Jesus now! Look, you grey-headed men and women who have never looked before; look now! Strangers and foreigners who have not heard this word before, there is life in a look at the Crucified One for you! You guiltiest of the guilty, and you most amiable of the amiable, turn away from anything there is in yourselves, bad or good, and look to Jesus only. Receive from Jesus all He brings you—pardon, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, Himself. He that comes to a wedding feast has nothing to do but to eat and to drink. Give your mind up to this delightful exercise. Take the food which God provides you. You shall do good works afterwards, for they will follow as a consequence of the strength which comes of receiving heavenly food through faith, but just now eat, drink, and be merry, as becomes a Prince’s marriage. May the Father be pleased, His Son be honored, and His church be comforted through you! Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 21:33-46

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—42(VERSION 1), 509, 488

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