

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2021

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SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:1-14

1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' 5 But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. John Bower '00

When I was pastoring a church, one of the events my wife and I enjoyed hosting was our annual Christmas open house. It was a chance for us to welcome the church into our home for an evening of Christmas cheer and fellowship. It was always enjoyable and memorable, except for those times when it had to be canceled due to inclement weather. There is nothing more disappointing than planning an event, then having to cancel it because no one can come.

That situation reminds me of this passage. In the parable, God, the great King, has prepared the most wonderful Kingdom (so joyful and bountiful it is compared to a wedding feast). God called the people of Israel to join the Kingdom and pledged to be their God, but they rejected the invitation, so God rejected them, punished them, and destroyed their city.

Then he sent his servants into the entire world to gather all the people he could find in the name of the Son. It is the universal call of the gospel to all people. Those who respond are gathered into the church, the visible representation of God's Kingdom on earth. Yet even as they gather, only those who are wearing wedding garments are given permission to stay and take part in the celebration—only those clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Any other righteousness or claim will not suffice.

How then do we attain this garment? This question brings us back to Christmas. God's own beloved Son was sent into the world to provide the garment of righteousness for us. He lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death on our behalf. He, though righteous, took our sin upon himself to pay the penalty for it on the cross, and he offers us his righteousness in return. All who place their trust in him receive this gift through faith. This is why Jesus' birth is good news of great joy—for we who were once alienated from God by sin are now welcomed to the Kingdom now and forever. Amen!

PRAYER

Almighty and gracious God, thank you for creating us, for loving us, and for not leaving us lost and separated from you by our sin. Thank you, loving Father, for sending your own Son into this broken world in order to redeem us and bring us into your Kingdom. Give us all joyful, thankful, and loving hearts this Christmas season as we celebrate once again your saving work on our behalf in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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