

- *Pray for those who turn away from the wedding feast of the Father and find themselves on the receiving end of God's wrath. Pray about this, and ask the Lord how you can best understand this part of the parable and its application.*

## Final Prayer

Jesus, stay close to us; .....  
 Holy Spirit, breathe on us; .....  
 Father Almighty, take control; .....  
 For in You, we are complete. AMEN

## Prayer

Dear Saviour, remind me again of what You have done for me. Show me the bitterness of death and the scars of sacrifice You bore for me; and if I am too proud to look on Your revelation, challenge me again and again lest I lose my way through self-righteous ignorance. Give me the grace and humility, I pray, to look again upon the sight of Your crucifixion, and know You did it all for me. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Broken Families

*Pray for families broken apart by violence or abuse, whatever its source. Pray for children who have no happiness, relationships or normal life, as these have been denied them.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for scientists whose work is to monitor the health of our planet*
- *Pray for the housebound and chronically sick who live near you*
- *Give thanks for the many acts of kindness shown to you*

## Meditation

This is our praise of Almighty God;

to respect His authority as our Creator and Lord;  
 to accept His grace comes before our faith;  
 to discipline our souls to His Word and His will;  
 to pursue His will for us with every fibre of our being.

to declare Him by word and deed to a needy world;  
 to lead a life that reflects the highest of moral standards.  
 to act with care and compassion towards all we meet;  
 to love and care for our families, our nations and the world;

May we praise our maker while we have breath!

## Bible Study - Matthew 22:1-14

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus spoke to them again in parables. He said:* <sup>2</sup> *'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who, as a father, gave a wedding feast for his son.* <sup>3</sup> *He sent out his servants to summon those who had been invited to the wedding feast, but they did not want to come.* <sup>4</sup> *Again, he sent other servants, saying, "Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have arranged my dinner, my prepared cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."* <sup>5</sup> *But they were not interested and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,* <sup>6</sup> *and then the rest seized his servants, abused them, and killed them.*

<sup>7</sup> *The king was enraged. He sent out his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.* <sup>8</sup> *Then he said to his servants, "The feast is ready, but those invited did not deserve to come.* <sup>9</sup> *Go therefore into the busy streets, and invite as many as you find to come to the wedding feast."* <sup>10</sup> *The servants went*

out onto the streets and gathered everyone they could find, both bad and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> 'However, when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not dressed for the wedding, <sup>12</sup> and said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without being suitably dressed?" And the man was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him to the evil outside where there will be distress and anguish." <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.'

## Review

The relationship of Jesus with the Pharisees was at a profoundly low point, and could only go lower. Jesus knew that the Jewish religious leaders were attempting to kill him, and it is no surprise that His next parable contains some sharp unpleasantness. Within this anguished tale lies a revelation of God's saving plan, saying just a little more than has been said before, and this is the treasure we must look for. The parable is in scripture not just because it marks a further low point in Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees and scribes, but because it adds to our understanding of the Church and the nature of salvation.

Jesus addressed the Pharisees and chief priests with this parable about a banquet, which in those days was immediately understood as referring to God's final judgement day, when the Messiah was expected to come and have a great feast with all God's people, who were, of course, expected to be Jews.

**The arrangements for dinner and their rejection.** The first noticeable thing about this passage come in verse 2, where the word 'man' is attached to 'king' in Greek, and in the translation I have indicate that the host of the wedding feast was a king, but it was given 'as a father (man) ... for a son' (22:1). Within the allegory of the parable, this tells us that there was a 'father / son' relationship between God and the Messiah. Yet again, Jesus told His accusers what they wanted to hear (His claim to be God's son), but in the coded language of the parable, so it was difficult for them to tie down their accusation of blasphemy!

Wedding feasts have to be meticulously planned, and in this one, invitations had already gone out and people had indicated their responses. Just as today, it would have been regarded as unacceptable to turn away at the last moment without informing a host that you were not able to come, yet this is what happens in the parable. At the very moment when all is ready, the guests have other things to do! Now this is where the parable departs radically from what we might expect, and also as it is told in Luke (14:115-24). Jesus described how that not only were the people of Israel uninterested in what God was doing for them, they killed His messengers (22:6)! Whilst the first messengers (22:3) were the prophets, the target for this annihilation was Jesus, John the Baptist and the disciples!

**The response of the King** Verse 7 continues the same terrible theme, telling us how the King responded to what happened. We should remember this is a parable, however, and the story is there for us to find out what God is saying rather than to anguish over parts of what it says. The King takes action to kill those who have destroyed His servants, and although this sounds awful to us, in the language of the parable, those who have acted against God have signed their own death warrants; and remember, in this context, death means eternal separation from God.

The King then proceeded to fill the banquet with anyone who was available to come. Servants, this time probably meaning the disciples, were sent out a third time to the busy streets. The phrase used in the New Testament Greek describes a thoroughfare of a city used by people for work and business at its busiest. The call went out to fill the banquet,

but there was no qualification on who would be drawn in by this great call of God, as it says in verse 10 'both bad and good' were welcomed.

We may feel familiar with the wide nature of God's call, but we should not forget that in Jesus' time this concept was dynamite. Perhaps it is still so today for a world in which everyone is expected to give the same respect to any religion whatever, without suggesting that there is in fact only one God who is 'Lord of all'.

**A problem at the wedding feast.** The final part of the parable, on the face of it, gives us problems. It seems extraordinarily unfair to us that someone who has been invited into God's banquet 'from the streets' should be turned away because they are not properly dressed (22:12). But we make the mistake of reading the parable too literally. Jesus was using story language to describe something very important about our responsibility to respond to the invitation of God. No-one would turn up to a wedding, however they were invited and in whatever age or culture, without wearing suitable attire. The point is that the call of God may be offered universally, but it requires some response from us, just as we would seek to 'do what is right' when attending a wedding.

The parable describes something akin to one who responds to God by doing precisely nothing! In fact, this is how the chief priests and the elders have responded to God's invitation given through His Son Jesus. Now the garment the invited man should have worn was the garment of a proper response to the invitation of God, which, from the preaching of Jesus and John the Baptist had always been clear. It was the repentance which leads to salvation. In scripture, salvation is described variously as a mantle or form of clothing (Eph 6:17, 1 Thess. 5:8; 1 Peter 5:5; Rev 3:18, 19:8), and has as its prime components the grace and mercy of Almighty God, and also the response by repentance and faith of the believer. This is the wedding garment to be worn at the feast of the Messiah, and the religious authorities were not wearing it.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Compare this passage with the parable of the vineyard (21:33-41). What does this passage tell us that the previous parable does not?
2. What do you feel when you read about the 'king' who is 'enraged'? Are you content to accept this as allegorical, or do these words means something more?
3. Is repentance a 'one off' requirement for entry into the Kingdom, and if not, why do we need to do it again and again?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The simple allegorical challenge coming from this passage is to be properly dressed for the wedding feast! We must be dressed with repentance, and repentance is matter of humility before God. It is hard to continue a life of self centeredness, for example, and expect to be regarded as a repentant Christian. Repentance is also a very personal response to Jesus, and it is something that affects other people just as everything we do affects others.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Consider whether other people regard you as someone who is a person of repentance. Make a list of the things you have repented of (to your knowledge). This is a difficult exercise, but it can be helpful, for we often take spiritual disciplines for granted, and when we look at them carefully, there is much we can do to find a more secure relationship with God our Father.*