

Matthew 22:1-4 Saturday October 14,2017

The answer is Tricia Nixon. The question is: Who was the last child of a president to be married in the White House? I would imagine that it was an extremely ornate affair. I can well imagine the military band playing the regality of the dress and the finest food cooked by the greatest of chefs. But alas! I can only imagine it because I was not there. Through some oversight, I'm sure, I never received my invitation. Did you get yours?

I'm fairly sure you would have to "be someone" to be invited to a White House wedding. Many people would consider it an honor. Not many will ever be invited to such a social event as this.

But wait! Hold on there! There is an even a more important event that you and I have been invited to attend. It is a much greater honor than being invited to the White House, or any other earthly palace or estate. I certainly hope you're not too busy to attend.

"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying 'The kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son'"

Perhaps we should retrace our steps a little. This parable is the third installment in a series of rebukes directed toward the Jewish leaders. In the context, Jesus has been teaching in the temple following his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The chief priests and elders, rankled by his popularity with the people, interrupt his discourse and demand that he give one good reason why he has the right to open his mouth on their turf. In response to the churlishness, Jesus tell the Jewish leaders

that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to a people producing its fruits.

The prediction is illustrated in our parable as the original invited guests—representing the chief priests and Pharisees—they lose their place at the royal buffet. The king then sends his servant to invite anyone who will come. The servants do just that and the newly invited guests are a motley crew, made up of both bad and good. That’s you and me.

As we’ve seen already, the king finds a man at the feast not wearing a wedding garment. Was this a special kind of tunic, fringed with lace, perhaps, and lined with pockets full of rice and birdseed for the newlyweds? Probably not. More likely, a wedding garment was a nice set of clothes used for special occasions, much like we would wear “church clothes” on Sunday morning. If this is the case, then a guest without a wedding garment is an underdressed attendee like a man appearing at funeral in torn shorts and flip-flops. The gesture would be offensive, a sign that the guest is oblivious to the significance of his invitation.

This explains the king’s swift action and it brings us back to the point of the parable. Jesus had said that the kingdom would be taken away from the Jewish leaders and given to a people producing its fruits. The wedding feast is an open invitation but there is a dress code. Everyone is welcome at the table, but the table changes us. Or, to keep with in imagery of the parable, it changes our clothes. If it doesn’t then we aren’t truly guests. We’re wedding crashers and our lot lies outside of the laughter and light. Many are called, says Jesus, but few are chosen.

From this parable, I think Jesus wants us to see 3 things. First, the gates of the kingdom are open wide. Salvation is not based on ethnicity,

education, income bracket, popularity, ministry position, personality type, cultural savvy, athletic ability, or attractiveness. For this reason, we should be very careful not to assume that the people most fit for the kingdom are those who look most like us.

Second, though the gates of the kingdom are open wide, the kingdom still has gates and we must enter through them. The kingdom imposes conditions on us. We must bear its fruits. We have a particular kind of clothing to wear to the feast. In the words of St. Paul, we must put on “as God’s chosen one, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility and the like.” A bitter and unforgiving heart is as much out of line for the Christian as a flip-flopping funeral goer.

Finally-and we mustn’t miss this point-the kingdom of God is a feast. And we should act like it. God means to be enjoyed. He is the God of laughter, full bellies, and second helpings. In his presence, says David in Psalm 16, there is a fullness of joy. Do you believe that?

Then come. There’s a seat with your name on it. Amen