

Expelled From a Royal Feast

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of coming to the feast of God in the right attitude and with the right heart, dressed in the righteousness and holiness that He provides.

Duration: 36:28

Scripture: Matthew 22:1-14, Matthew 28:19, Luke 9:2

Topics: "Expelled"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of the unheeded invitation found in the early verses of the passage. He explains that the call to the feast was rejected by those who made light of it and chose to prioritize their own interests. Despite this rejection, the grace of God is highlighted as he extends a second invitation to sinners who have defied him. The sermon also emphasizes the tragic consequences of rejecting God's invitation, drawing parallels to the historical events of the Romans' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The preacher concludes by highlighting the ongoing relevance of this message, as people continue to ignore God's invitation today.

Transcript

namely to Matthew chapter 22 verses 1 to 14. We are particularly concerned with one facet of this manifold portrait, but we shall look at it in its entirety first and then come to see one rather tragic episode as we conclude. The first thing that is obvious as we look at these words is this.

It is that the kingdom of heaven is described in terms of a feast. The man or woman who has responded to the gospel call should be a person who is recognizably feasting, feasting upon good things. The call to the kingdom is neither a call to a funeral nor to a fast, but a feast.

And it is unfortunate that so many of us convey the impression that it is anything else. When we say this, of course, we don't mean to imply that the Christian man has no burden to bear. He has.

He has an intransigent enemy that encounters him at every turn. But in the deepest depths of his soul, if he is a true Christian, there is a feasting upon things divine. There is a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

And may I remind you, those words were uttered to a persecuted community. When the apostle Peter spoke to a community of joy that is unspeakable and full of glory, he was not writing to a community that

were materially well off. He was writing to a people that were robbed of everything, including their home.

But he had no hesitation in saying this, that they were already receiving the end of their faith. And part of it was this, a deep, deep, settled peace and joy in God. In other words, to be a Christian is to be a man or a woman who is already feasting.

Now, that is the background that we have in this passage. It is a summons to a feast. Our Lord has commissioned his servants to go into the highways and the byways of life.

Indeed, he has commissioned his servants to go to the uttermost parts of the earth, to summon men into the kingdom and to be partakers of the kingdom feast. And as we therefore stand in his name in this book that he knocks tonight, we are not assuming something or presuming something that doesn't belong to us. This is his command.

Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, because the feast is ready, and the provisions are vast enough to meet the needs of all men everywhere. Now, there are two main things here that we shall look at tonight. First of all, there is the emphasis that our Lord places upon the unheeded invitation.

I suppose it is true to say that is what preponderates in the passage. Written across the whole passage there is this notion of the multitudes rejecting the invitation to the feast, treating it as if it were an invitation to a funeral. But there is something else here.

In the first leads on to the second. There was one man who did accept the invitation, but rather thoughtlessly. In consequence, though he found himself apparently at the festal table, waiting for the coming of the king and the beginning of the moment of banqueting, the king's eye fastened upon him.

Will you excuse me? Strange what happens to a man from time to time. The king fastens his eye upon him and sees that there is one thing which disqualifies him from participating in the least in the festal provisions. And he is excommunicated and cast out from the festal chamber.

Now, let's look briefly at these two pictures. First of all, we're looking at the masses. And the notion, the thought that pervades these early verses in the passage is that of the unheeded invitation.

If you have your New Testaments open before you, you will notice that verse five summarizes the attitude which is the subject of the first ten verses. But they made light of it, and they went off, one to his farm and another to his business. They made light of it.

In the first place, we read that the call was issued, inviting men to the feast, and was rejected. They would not come, says verse three. They made light of it, says verse five.

Now, it would seem that here our Lord has in mind what had already taken place during his ministry. He had sent out some of his disciples to proclaim good news. He had sent out his disciples into the villages round about to proclaim that the kingdom of God had come.

Which, in a nutshell, means this. The king has come. The king of the everlasting kingdom.

And with the coming of the king, he has power to do everything that is necessary to rectify wrong. If he does not rectify every wrong immediately, he will do so ultimately. But some he does here and now.

He will heal the sick. He will bring peace to the derailed mind. He will bring sanity again to a man or a woman that is almost taken over by satan.

And he will pardon the sins of men. You see, the king has come, and with the king, the benefits of a kingdom that is everlasting. Every kingdom has its own benefits.

You live in the British Isles, there are certain benefits. If you live in this great land, there are other benefits. I suppose if you go south of the border, though you Canadians may be very suspicious of this, but south of the border there are some benefits too.

Every kingdom has its own benefits. This kingdom has. And all the benefits of the kingdom are wrapped up in the person of the king.

The king has come, and he sent his emissaries to tell men and women everywhere, the king has come, and the powers of the kingdom are unleashed among you. Come. But they wouldn't listen.

Or, rather, to be more precise, they listened somewhat, but they would not come. I think this is a very real touch, is it not? The farmer they invited listened for a while, shrugged his shoulders, went back to his oxen, and went on with his ploughing. A businessman they invited had his ears open.

He thought there might be a bargain here. He listened, he heard, shrugged his shoulders, back to his job. They would not come.

They would not come. They treated the feast as if it were a funeral. They considered the divinely proffered joy as if it were judgment, and the freely offered provisions of God, the festal provisions of God, as if they were all tintured with poison.

They had no taste for the things of the kingdom. But the story doesn't end there. Now, believing, and to those of you who know what the Bible says about God, you might, if you were simply thinking of the sovereignty and the greatness of God, you might conclude, well, all right, if they will not have it, then surely the book ought to close.

The offense to the deity is such. You don't expect him to make a second invitation. But you know, such is the grace of God.

He comes again, the sovereign Lord of the universe. He who holds the stars in their places, and the constellations. He who lit the sun.

The Lord God omnipotent comes again to a sinner man that has defied his every word and refused his pleading. And that's what we have now. Verse four, he sent other servants, saying, tell those that are invited, behold, I've made ready my dinner.

My oxen and my fat calves are already killed, and everything is ready. Come to the marriage feast. Oh, how gracious a God in our hearts.

The reference here is to a different set of servants. Now, we mustn't read too much into this. If we can read anything into it, I suggest to you that the reference now is to the apostles going out after the day of Pentecost.

It is a prophetic message. It is a seeing ahead of things that were yet to take place. Some of them would be the same people, in fact, and yet different.

Now they have seen their Lord reigning on the tree, for reigning he was, accomplishing our redemption, declaring triumphantly, it is finished. They would have seen him by this time risen from the dead. They would have known by this time that he had ascended at the Father's right hand, because he sent forth the Holy Spirit as he said he would.

Now they go forth, declaring that everything is ready. You see, it was only after the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit that, in point of fact, everything was ready. Now everything was seen to be prepared.

The table was spread. Salvation is an accomplished thing. A fountain has been opened for sin and uncleanness.

It's there. A righteousness has been wrought which is acceptable by God. It's proved by his session at the Father's right hand.

God has received the atoning sacrifice. Eternal life is the gift of the Christ. All things are ready.

The table is spread. The feast is waiting for those to come who are invited. But injury followed insult.

Not only did they make light of it and treat it with the utmost scorn, but we read they seized his servants and they treated them shamefully and they killed them. There wasn't an apostle that wasn't slain, according to the testimony of history. They treated the bearers of divine tidings as if they were the servants of men.

They despised the sender and they despised the sent ones. And they would not heed the tidings though they were invited to a kingly and a royal feast. That's the tragedy here.

But there is one other thing here before we pass on. The other fact we have in this first part of the chapter is the Master's declaration that the call repeatedly rejected incurred the divine wrath. The dishonor involved in the recurring rejection is actually self-destructive.

You cannot reject God unduly without destroying yourself in the act. People speak about breaking the law of God in a way one knows what is meant, but you see it's not God's law that you break, ultimately it's yourself. You never break God's law.

It is eternal as God. Defy it, reject it, refuse it, it's yourself that you break. And the same with the invitation.

Heed it, listen to it, weigh it up, tear it down, it's yourself you break. Here was sin against the Son whose festal occasion it was. Here was sin against the Father, the King, who had arranged the feast.

Here was sin against the servants of the Father and of the Son that brought glad tidings to such wicked men. The Father, the King was angry. Now this is a note that is not much loved these days, I don't suppose it ever was, but note the Bible is unequivocal about it.

The God who arranged the feast is a God who is angry. When those for whom it was purposed and prepared despise the things divinely prepared. There is a phrase in the book of the Revelation which is surely one of the most graphic and descriptive and eloquent phrases in any literature when it speaks of the wrath of the Lamb.

The Lamb. Nothing is more peaceable, amicable, meek than a Lamb. But the culminating point in history will see the wrath of the Lamb.

Love despised becomes wrath kindled. And the greater the love despised, the more terrifying the kindling of consequent wrath. The King was wroth.

In fact there is a statement here which again is prophetic. You see our Lord does this kind of thing, so do the prophets in the Old Testament for that matter. They speak as if things had already happened.

They have not actually happened, but they're so certain of happening that they speak of them as already done. And our Lord puts it like this. He speaks in verse 7 of the King.

He sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Now that was as yet future. Our Lord is describing what happened in the year 70 A.D. when the Romans under Titus waded knee-deep in the blood of the victims in the streets of Jerusalem.

And at last the city and the people that had rejected the Christ of God, who offered the festal things of heaven to a sin-bound community, are now rejected. And if this were only a scene that is depicted in history it would be tragic. If we were only reading about history here, things that happened thousands of years ago or hundreds of years ago, it would be tragic.

But my friend there is something that makes it more tragic. It is this. That though we have this episode before us and though we know that the judgment of God was meted out upon the rejecters of his Son, men still do the same thing.

And we cannot even feebly learn from the lessons of the past the unheeded invitation. But now come, come to the second. I find this even more challenging than the first.

The unacceptable guest. Now this man came all right. I can't tell you why he came, I can't tell you what his motives were, the Bible doesn't tell us and so I can't say, but come he did.

And our Lord depicts him as having come into the very place, the very, the very festal room, the dining room in the palace where the guests were gathered for the festal occasion. And there he is. He's come.

He's there. But the fact and the tragedy that comes out here is this, that he was unacceptable. Though the terms of the calling were such that those who went out were to gather in all they could find in the very highways of life, right out on the main streets, on the main thoroughfares.

This man came and though he came he was unacceptable. Why? Well now look at the picture. The man heard the royal invitation and he accepted it.

We start there. Unquestionably he realized the honor that was involved. I suppose he might have thought rightly that it was an honor at any rate to visit the presence of the royal household, of the royal palace.

I don't know what other thoughts may have lingered in his mind, but he was deeply conscious of the high privilege which was coming his way, that of sitting at the palace table on a royal occasion. And he accepted. Perhaps he questioned at first whether it was really meant for him.

But you see the terms of the invitation were so wide that they obviously included him. Look again at verse nine. As many as the servants should find.

Now you can't be wider than that. The servants were told to go out and to gather into the feast as many as they should find. You see no one is excluded.

They weren't told as they went out, now don't you go after such and such a type of person. If you see a man dressed like this, well keep away from him. If you see a man from such and such a sector of society, avoid him.

No, no. It was as wide as this. As many as you find.

So thought this man. It applies to me. It was in that faith that he set out.

Now I'm using my imagination now. This isn't said in scripture, but I imagine he must have been a fairly decent sort of a fellow. And there is nothing here to indicate that he was at last cast out because he came in rags or he hadn't washed his face or washed his hands or he wasn't hygienically acceptable or anything of that kind.

My impression is, for right or wrong, that he really set up for this occasion. He must have had a fairly decent wardrobe, this man, and he put on his best attire. He's going, he's going to the palace.

This is a vile occasion. He's well groomed. He's well dressed.

He knows what he's about. He appreciates what is of value and significance and of honor for him. And if you were to see his gait as he led for the palace entrance, I believe you would have seen a good example of a man well groomed and well dressed, ready and acceptable as men might judge for the palace affair of the day.

He heard the king's invitation and he accepted it, but he was subjected to the king's inspection and he was discovered as unworthy and unacceptable. The gaze of the king focused upon him. Look at verse 11.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. Now let's use our imagination just a little. There's call for it here.

The king came in. All are waiting. The table is spread.

Everything is ready. All the guests have seen what is on the table thus far, and they're waiting for the one moment when the king comes in. And when the king comes in, soon the feast will start.

They hear the fanfares and the sound of the trumpets and thus last he appears. And from the elevated position and the high table in the oriental court, you can imagine the king looking down over the gathered throng and he sees them all. But at last he notices one man, so out of place, so different.

He's the only one there clothed as he is clothed. There may be variations and differences between all the other people, but this man stands out. And the thing that makes it absolutely unique is this.

He hasn't on a wedding dress. Now notice, it doesn't say he had on a very bad shabby dress, but he didn't have a wedding dress. The eye of the king saw him.

The glory and the majesty of the king had been belittled by him. And so the king asks the question, how is it that this man arrived in heel? Whence came this man? Now, a word of explanation. It was an eastern custom that whenever their kings invited guests to the royal palace and to the royal table, not only did the

king provide food on the table, but he provided a garb, a dress for his guests.

Now, if we don't realize this, then it's very difficult to understand what our lord is getting at. As a matter of fact, the way to the dining room always led via the robing room, so that every guest that came into the dining room, as a king's guest on any such festive occasion as this, was clad in the robe that was given him by the royal servant in the robing room. Now, when you come to think of it, this was the most sensible arrangement.

For example, you might have somebody that was invited to a royal occasion who was very poor, who couldn't afford to buy a new garb for the occasion. He can't go to the bank and draw a check and have a new ring out. He has to go very much as he is.

He only has the poor paltry clothes in which he stands. But you see, it would make no difference for him. Because when he came to the king's palace and came to the gates and was taken in, he would be taken immediately to the worn robes of the king.

And there would be attendants waiting for him to measure him and to give him a kind of apparel that fitted him a wedding garment, so that he did not feel overawed in the presence of others. Again, I suggest to you it was the most sensible arrangement for this reason. Someone exceedingly rich might have been invited, whose wardrobe would be very full and very flowery and very attractive.

And in oriental countries they can be very elaborate and very colourful. And I, for my part, like to see them. But you can imagine somebody dressed in such gorgeous apparel that he would be the centre of attraction on an occasion like this.

There's no possibility of it. Whatever kind of apparel may be yours, you have to leave it in the robing room. It's taken off.

And instead of that, you have the apparel that the king himself has provided for you. You are dressed in the robe provided for the wedding, so that every man is equal before the king. They're all dressed, if they are to dine at his table, they are all dressed in the garment provided for the occasion.

But this man, somehow or other, I can't tell you how, probably it's a hypothetical case, and our Lord is just describing a hypothetical issue. We won't argue about that, but he describes it somehow or other as if the man has got right in there, and the king's eye meets him and inspects him. And the question is asked, how did he get in here? Do you remember what they told? We have in verse 12 the unanswerable question.

Friend, how cameest thou in hither without the wedding garment? And he was speechless. I don't know whether he bullied the attendants or whether he knew some secret passage to come into the dining hall or not, I'm not going into the details of that, I can't tell you. But one thing I know is this, the king found him out.

He was different. This man had either browbeaten the king's servants or somehow bypassed them, and here he is, but he does not bypass the scrutiny of the sovereign on the high table. And then comes the uncompromising command, verse 13.

Then said the king to his servants, bind him, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. He had received the command and obeyed it. The invitation had come to his own ears, he'd accepted it.

He recognized the privilege of it. But alas, alas, he did not see the need to comply to the regulations of the palace. Look at the unparalleled disaster with which it all ends up.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Instead of light, he finds himself in darkness. Instead of joy, he finds himself weeping.

Instead of being in a feast, there is gnashing of teeth with pain. Here is a man who is trying to treat the almighty God as if God were but a man. That's the long and short of it.

Here is a man who is dictating terms to the king of the palace. Yes, I'm coming, but I'm coming as I please. You see, God won't have it.

He won't have it. He won't have it. And it matters not what your status may be in society, how learned, how cultured, how rich, how wise.

He will not. And though you see the table spread, your condemnation will be the greater. For all the years of your eternal misery, you will have the memory of the bliss of the banqueting hall that you missed, the things you saw but could not partake of, and the king's face that might have smiled in grace upon you had you accepted his terms as well as his invitation, but which is now a face of anger.

These were two dangers, our Lord, so existing among the ancient hearers of the message proclaimed by his disciples and apostles and by himself. Has time changed? Are there those who still disregard the royal invitation to a royal feast? Are there those among us tonight who have been invited not once nor twice? God in his infinite compassion has told you of the festal, festal provisions of grace that bring the very bread of pardon and the wine of peace into the experience of a man and a woman here upon earth. And you've turned it down.

And he's come again. Now this is the wonder of grace. He's come again.

And in the infinity of his mercy and compassion, he strikes the same chord in you years again tonight in this church here in Mars. And he says the feast is ready. There's yet room to spare.

At last, not a seat will be vacant, but will you be there? Clothed not in your own righteousness, not coming as you please, but as he pleases. Coming to the one who disrobes you of your sin, and there is only one. Coming to him who takes away the filthy garments of our own unrighteousness and self-righteousness, and who clothes with his own, counsels and doth touch the heart of it.

When in that lovely hymn that we shall sing just now he said this, Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty is, my glorious breath. Midst flaming worlds, he's thinking of the angels and the archangels, midst flaming worlds in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head. There is not a man, there is not an angel, nor an archangel that can point a finger, find a fault, see a flaw.

May I say so reverently, not even the almighty God himself. Now this takes your breath away. You're aware of your evil and your sin and the pollution of your heart as I am of mine.

This takes a man's breath away. But listen, a man who appears before God in Christ, he appears in such impeccable righteousness that even God himself finds no fault in him. He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and we are complete in him.

Oh, come to the feet. And in order to enjoy the paradise of God, come to the roving room tonight. Let him disrobe you, let him take your rags away, let him take your sins away, let him clothe you with his righteousness.

This is the gospel, and it is for you, the invitation of God tonight. Let us pray. Now, heavenly Father, we are humbled when we think of this kind of picture given by our Lord of the hearts of men and of the perversity of men made of the same natural stuff as we are.

We see ourselves reflected in so much of this, and so we acknowledge our sins as we think of the sins of others. But our Lord, we thank thee that once again this is a day, this is a night of grace. There's a star in the sky, and it shines right down to where we are.

And it tells us of the roving room, where men who come in their own garments that are sin-spoilt are robed for thy presence. Bring us all there that we may see thy face, and enjoy thy peace, and thy presence at thy table now, and at last in thy glory. For Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

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