

Divine Grace and Human Responsibility

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting responsibility for our sin, living in the light of God's grace, being faithful in our material possessions, and fulfilling the work God has assigned to us.

Scripture: Psalm 51:2, Matthew 22:2, Luke 16:10, John 1:9, John 21:20

Topics: "Divine Grace", "Christian Responsibility"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of reflecting the kind of God we truly believe in through the way we live our lives. He emphasizes that our actions are a reflection of our beliefs, whether in fear, irresponsibility, mercy, or holiness. Using the parable in Matthew 22:2-14, he illustrates God's graciousness in inviting all to the wedding feast but also highlights the accountability we have for our actions. Bieber stresses the need to accept responsibility for our sins, embrace the light of God, be faithful in material matters, and fulfill the work assigned to us by the Lord.

Transcript

The kind of life we live is a reflection of the kind of God we actually believe in...not the God we profess to believe in, but the God we really believe in.

- If we believe in a God who is a tyrant we will go through our lives cringing with fear.

- If we believe in a God who is a pushover, we will slide through life as irresponsible slobs.

-- If our God is mercy we will be merciful.

-- If our God is holy, we will be holy.

Here is Jesus' description of the God who is his Father:

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king

who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash

their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:2-14

The king in this parable is God. He is a gracious king. He's giving a marriage feast for his son and he wants to share his joy with his guests.

"Behold, I have made ready my dinner. My oxen and my fat calves are killed and everything is ready. Come to the marriage feast!"

When the king is turned down by the invited guests he sends his servants out to the streets.

"Gather everybody you can find, bad and good, rich and poor. Bring them in and fill my wedding hall."

What could be more gracious than a wedding feast where everybody's welcome?

The kingdom of God is a wedding feast where the door is open to all and the king provides everything for his guests...everything. He provides the food, the music, he even provides the wedding garment. All we have to do is leave our old ways, put on his new wedding garment and come to the feast.

But there's another side to this king...(remember this king is God and this description of the king is coming to us from the Son of God)...He is a king who for all his kindness and warmth, nevertheless, holds each person accountable for what he does.

The invited guests who made light of their invitation, who treated the king's servants shamefully and killed them were held accountable for their actions. Troops were sent by the king to destroy those murderers and burn their city.

What a harsh way for Jesus to talk! Except, that Jesus is describing reality...this is the way it is in the real world of the real kingdom of the real God.

And after the wedding hall is filled the king comes in to look at his guests and he finds a man who has the audacity to come to the feast without wearing the garment he was given.

"Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?"

....he was speechless.

"Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness."

So, what is God like?

-- The God who is in this room....

-- The God who is answering our prayers...

-- The God who comes to us in the bread and wine...

-- The God who heals our lives...

How else can we describe him but to say that he is good beyond comprehension.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And yet, if this wonderful God comes into the wedding hall and finds us walking around without a wedding garment he banishes us to the outer darkness.

What does this mean? It means that the God of all grace holds us accountable for what we do with his grace.

By his grace, the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus, God sets us free from our sins. But by setting us free from our sins he also makes us responsible for our actions.

The servant who was forgiven 10,000 talents was responsible for what he did with his forgiveness. If he takes his forgiveness and buries it and fails to live it, fails to forgive the man who begs forgiveness for a hundred pence, then this ungrateful servant loses his forgiveness and he's in the outer darkness.

Whenever Jesus talks about divine grace he also talks about human responsibility. But like most of the culture around us,

-- we want the grace without the responsibility,

-- we want to come to the banquet but we don't want anyone talking to us about the fact that we aren't wearing the wedding garment.

"Look, I know I have a bad temper but I can't help it. It was the way I was brought up."

"People may think I'm stingy, but I lived through some bad times and now I just can't help hoarding things."

"So who wouldn't compromise a little in the area of sexual fantasy if they were married to an iceberg like my husband or my wife."

Not that the tendency to pass the buck hasn't always been there.

"Lord, don't blame me for eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. The woman you gave me.... she gave it to me and I ate."

"Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you do not sow....so I buried the talent."

The same Lord who comes to us today and says,

"Your sins are forgiven. Rise and walk,"

also says,

"Now, put on a wedding garment."

So, how do we put on a wedding garment?

1. To put on a wedding garment means that I am responsible for my sin, including my thoughts and attitudes.

The minute I put on that wedding garment of grace I can

no longer blame my sin on my wife,

my husband,

my hard times,

my unhappy childhood,

.....it's my sin.

Only when I accept responsibility for my sin can I repent

of my sin. Then the sin is plunged under the blood of

the Lamb and is gone.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and

cleanse me from my sin, For I acknowledge my transgression; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Psalm 51:2-4

God help us to take the sin in our lives that we're blaming on others or excusing as heredity weakness and accept responsibility for it and repent so that we can be forgiven.

2. To put on a wedding garment means that I am responsible for the light I have been given.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not, But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:9-13

When we receive Jesus into our hearts, we receive light --- he is the light. And by that light we see God. The more clearly we see Jesus the more clearly we see God. And once I have seen the light of God,

-- I now have a path on which to walk,

-- I know why I'm in this world,

-- I know which direction I have to go.

Now it's up to me to walk in that light.

There will come seasons of hardship when we are tempted to turn away from the light and go back to our old ways.

But we can never go back to where we were before we saw the light...we were ignorant then, but now we know the Light and we are accountable.

3. To put on a wedding garment means that I am responsible for the material things a I've been given.

In the kingdom of God the spiritual and the material are always linked together. God, who is Spirit, became flesh and dwelt among us. The Spirit of Jesus comes to us in physical bread and wine.

-- Our spiritual worship is to present our physical bodies to God as a living sacrifice.

-- Our spiritual commitment to God is tested in the physical realm by our purity in man/woman relationships.

-- Our spiritual faithfulness is proven by our faithfulness in the unrighteous mammon.

"He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteousness mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if

you have not been faithful in that which is
another's who will give you that which is your own?"

Luke 16:10-12

When we put on that wedding garment we are committing
ourselves to faithfulness in the unrighteous mammon.

We are disciplined,

generous,

responsible in the way we handle money and things.

Faithfulness in the unrighteous mammon is the first step
in learning to handle the true riches of God's kingdom.

4. To put on a wedding garment means that I am respon-
sible for the work the Lord has assigned to me.

Peter turned and saw following them the disciple
whom Jesus loved,....When Peter saw him, he said
to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus
said to him, "If it is my will that he remain
until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

John 21:20--22

Peter is not responsible for John's labor. He's respon-
sible only for his own.

"Never mind what John is called to do, just
follow me, Peter."

Many of us have our eyes on what some other servant of
the Lord is called to do, or on some task we always
fancied we'd like to do. There is never any fulfillment
in trying to perform a task God did not give us.

-- Moses had his job.

-- Ezekiel had his.

-- Mary had hers.

-- Anna had hers. --- You have yours

--- I have mine.

We don't have to feel guilty because we're not accomplishing what Moses did...and we don't have to feel jealous. It's the work that's right in front of us.

Or the unmistakable vision of a labor we've been called to but have been pushing out of our minds. Or an unfinished task we walked away from some years ago.

The work God has given us is a work he's equipped us to do. And in the doing of it is wonderful peace... wonderful peace.

We're gathered here today as guests of the king. This is the wedding feast he has prepared for his Son. The king has provided everything, the food, the music, even the wedding garment.

And when the king comes in to look at the guests he expects to see a wedding garment on each of us.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/divine-grace-and-human-responsibility/>

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