

King of Glory Lutheran Church
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Showing Up, Dressing the Part
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

God is holding a wedding banquet and inviting us to attend. Let's go! And dress the part!

OK, I've got some invitations to hand out. This one is for you! (handing an invitation to a congregation member) this one is for you. Oh and you, yes you have one here too!

I see the date is for today! Wonderful! Who else might enjoy an invitation? I know! Can you take this one to downtown and find the homeless woman with the grocery cart in the Safeway parking lot? Will you drive this one up to Cheyenne to the union pacific employee who is about to retire? Oh and will you take this one to Denver? I know there's a young woman sleeping in Washington park who is struggling with her "business".

Go, go! This is urgent! Why aren't you getting up? You haven't read the invitation OK. Open it up. (Reading aloud)

God invites you and me to the wedding of God's Son. Today! A feast of fine foods and well-aged wine will be served! God can't wait to see us!

Wow doesn't that sound amazing! Oh it's today? Wait a minute, wait a minute. I was going to work on my driveway this afternoon. It is one of the last few days with sun and warm temperatures. I'm not certain I can go.

Did you already have something planned for this afternoon too? Anybody going to watch the game at 6:30? They're playing the Giants. What were you going to do tonight?

But how can we turn God down? I mean it's not every day that God sends us an invitation! I wonder what I should wear? What are you going to wear?

While you continue to think about your availability for this evening, let's take a step back in time and unpack this parable just a tiny bit.

Jesus told them a parable: The Kingdom of Heaven is like....This is going to be a divine banquet not just any old Country Buffet line. It's a holy banquet! And the wedding is a metaphor for a relationship between God and God's people. The banquet a sign of the covenant between them, it will be a promise of life together. This is not just an ordinary wedding meal.

Think Prince Charles and Diana, think Prince William and Kate. Think Prince Charming and Cinderella! Royal affairs indeed!

It was customary that a "save the date" invitation would go out to guests. But beyond that, everyone in this story acts just a little - well...not customary.

The first invitation has gone out, and then the king sends the slaves to get the invited people. They refuse to come. They simply refuse.

Those receiving invitations also didn't act according to custom. In this honor and shame culture no one would have refused an invitation; especially from a king. That would've been absolutely unthinkable; like spitting in the King's face.

The king, after the blatant snub of people on the original invitation list, sent slaves and then troops to go and compel people to come – from the whole territory.

Yet what the king does is also unthinkable. Without regard to moral standards or ethics or compliance with Torah law, the king invites both good and bad people to his divine banquet. Everyone is welcome! Everyone is welcome!

We say that around here, don't we?

But it's the second part of the parable that is so confusing! Does it all come down to what clothes to wear? After the repeated invitations and multiple requests to obtain guests who will celebrate this glorious day of wedded bliss for his Son, we get *wham*. The King says, "Off with his head!"

Really? Calvin Klein isn't good enough? The best pair of Levi's? Adidas?

Anna Carter Florence thinks that "Jesus is smashing a few more idols, so that teenagers – whose developmental job it is to repeatedly violate any and all dress codes - do not have permanent biblical license for wearing any old darn thing." She writes, "my suggestion is that you ditch the flip-flops this minute, march back upstairs, and find something decent to wear to church unless you would like to

spend the rest of the day in outer darkness, where I promise you there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Preaching Year A with Anna Carter Florence. Published by Luther Seminary. St. Paul, MN. 2016. Pg 128)

Here is another possibility for throwing the un-robed guest out. We know that Matthew's community had suffered in some way. They were concerned about insiders and outsiders. Being cautious of those who might hurt them or had hurt them, they were eager to see appropriate judgment and punishment.

Think about it this way. If you're a female Hollywood actress who has been wined and dined by a popular film producer, this parable might sound like good news to you right about now. Throw him out. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Well we've had time to ponder our invitations. Are we ready to go? Are we going to show up?

These days, in reality it's easy to not show up. At least in person. It is simple to "like" or "dislike" an opinion on Facebook or a website. It is effortless to "friend" or "unfriend" a person without ever coming into contact with them.

All the people the king had invited were busy doing other things. They chose not to show up.

Brothers and sisters let's go! We've been invited – by God no less! Jesus has your tux; the coat and tie perfectly pressed. It's laid out on the bed. He has the most beautiful gown of pure silk hanging in the closet with purse and shoes to match.

What a party this will be! There will be amazing wine and aged cheese. A rack of lamb. It's in Jesus honor because salvation has been offered through him.

Has Christ made a difference in our lives? Do we know that we are loved! Does that give us joy in our hearts? Then let's show up and dress the part! Everyone is invited!

You've been to a great party, right? This isn't confession time. We'll save the best party stories for later. The music is grooving. Food is fabulous! People are fun! God is good.

That's a picture of the joyful life God invites us to enter. Life is difficult in and of itself. God wants us and desires us to delight in God and Jesus Christ.

And... that's not all. Apparently, this party does not have an end. We do get a royal invitation, every single day. We are to wear Christ and live in God's love every day. We choose to be a robed wedding guest not just one night, but every day.

As Paul writes to the Colossians, "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

(Walking back to the font) Remember this little invisible symbol? (Sign of the cross) We wear it every day and it's like a wedding robe. Through Baptism, we've been clothed in Christ. Washed clean in Him, we are called to joyfully live out our entire lives sharing the Good News of Christ. Clearly God wants everyone to know about it! And it appears (for Matthew) that we need to keep dressing the part. Every day.

There was urgency in the King's request. There is urgency now. We must continue to invite others to the feast. We must work for the hungry, the unseen, those who have no voice. Each day our cross reminds us that God has issued the invitation. We must not keep it to ourselves.

So – are you coming or not? What are you going to wear?
Amen