

God's Wedding Banquet Is Ready!

‡ Excuses? (vv.1-7)

‡ Determined King... (vv.8-10)

‡ Wear wedding clothes! (vv.11-14)

In the name of Jesus, God's own Son, dear fellow servants and guests at God's banquet:

Do you ever find the Bible a bit irrational? From a humanistic viewpoint how does today's FIRST LESSON (Isaiah 25:6-9) make sense? "***Death will be swallowed up forever.***" Why doesn't everyone trust God's promise so that they too can "***rejoice and be glad in his salvation***"? How rational is our SECOND LESSON (Philippians 4:4-13) where prisoner Paul tells fellow Christians in Philippi to "***rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, 'Rejoice!'***"? In times of high anxiety we're "***not [to] be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God***"? Paul advises thinking only about "***whatever is true...noble...right...pure...lovely...admirable...excellent...or praiseworthy***"? Are we supposed to ignore problems and smile our way through life?

Sometimes what seems irrational just needs a little more information. For example, books have been written about why dieting Americans can't lose weight. Kids on skim milk weigh more than whole milk drinkers. Thin French eat lots of pastry and multiple course meals. Apparently, slowing down to savor your food is as important as what's on the plate. Many things defy human reason, especially in Bible faith. For instance, since **God's Wedding Banquet Is Ready**, why would there be any...

‡ Excuses? (vv.1-7)

There's something irrational going on here in Jesus' *Parable of the Wedding Banquet*. First of all, it's Holy Week, Tuesday between Palm Sunday and Easter, yet Jesus the Holy One is surrounded by very unholy people. And who are they? The highly religious leaders called "***the chief priests and elders of the people***" (21:23). They're not just questioning Jesus' authority. After all His miracles creating and healing and raising the dead, they want to discredit Jesus before the crowds in order to arrest and kill Him. And you thought it was only our modern media absolutely certain they know more than God or the people! Once again Jesus will put them to shame with an earthly story. He reveals heavenly truth to the simple and hides it from the wise and learned. Jesus defies all self-righteous human reason.

This sounds straight up, doesn't it? "***The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come....***" But then what's this: "***They refused***"! What could possibly make you feel better if all your wedding invitations RSVP'd: "No way!"

Would it not be rational to find yourself some different friends and relatives? So why does this king try again? "***He sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'***" What makes him keep inviting?

You sent personal messengers with a second batch of wedding invitations, and guess what? One mindlessly goes off to his field another to his business; the rest can't get a grip except on your servants to shamefully beat and kill them. Ever get angry cut off in traffic? If you're a king whose kindness meets with irrational, violent hatred it's time for overpowering force. The only thing strange is the king waited.

So why do we get so excited to be first in line for a wide screen TV, but never jump out of bed excited to come to the King's banquet Sunday morning? What is better about the mall that wants our

money as opposed to the King who gives it to us in the first place, along with health and good government to protect our use of it? *Stewardship for My Soul* begins with accepting God's invitation to the rich banquet of His Word and sacrament. If my hobby farm or field hunting or business are more important, I not only rob God of glory due, but I hurt my own soul too. ***“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*** (Matthew 16:26) This sin of indifference is all about me instead of God. You and I have not conquered this sin. Can anyone deny that we deserve God to call our His army?

‡ **Determined King... (vv.8-10)**

After so much trouble with wedding invitations, wouldn't you just elope? But what but angry love could keep driving this **Determined King**? ***“He said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”*** Against His own Jewish people God sent the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and in Jesus' time the Roman armies to let them feel His just wrath at sin. The strange part is all the centuries of invitations in between. And how strange that God kept preserving a Remnant of believers waiting like Mary until God finally sent the Christ through her virgin womb.

Hollywood could never picture such irrational grace and mercy of God. Who but the **King** of all creation would be so **Determined** to fill the wedding banquet of His Son with us Gentiles? That was you and me, us non-Jews, out there broken down on the on-ramps and exits of life's superhighway. Did His servants argue about such a strategy? “People are too busy to listen. Who will talk to us at their door? They have “Caller ID”! How can we get through? Wouldn't it be better to just close the doors and have a private party?” The **Determined King** commanded; His servants had no choice but to go. *Stewardship for My Soul* will gladly obey the King's commands, right down to what I wear.

‡ **Wear wedding clothes! (vv.11-14)**

This King is generous beyond human reason. Some of those folks were coming in from milking the cows and feeding the pigs. Mechanics came right from the garage. Maids got off their knees from scrubbing floors and came with hands still dripping. None wasted time worrying about discrimination or sexism. They just came because the King invited them. And he gave them clothes for the occasion.

So what's with the guy in the tattered rags? The coat room is still overstuffed with tuxedos. In spite of the insult, the King does not blow a gasket. He walks over and asks, ***“Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?”*** Little wonder ***“the man was speechless.”*** How irrational that human reason thinks Jesus' conclusion is over the top. ***“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are invited, but few are chosen.”*** Sometimes God almighty mimics sinners. This guest irrationally defied the king's generosity; the king let him feel irrational wrath.

When you think how God sent His Son to die for all sin including our indifference, how God invites everyone to trust in His Son Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, is it strange that God would get angry at their refusal? Strangely, He waits and patiently gives us another day of grace. The holiness heaven requires God gives with His righteousness in Christ. Why refuse His grace in Word and sacrament? In the context of Baptism the Holy Spirit says through Peter: ***“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*** (Acts 2:39 NIV) And ***“all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*** (Galatians 3:27 NIV)

For the *Stewardship of My Soul*, it's not faith that must be made reasonable; reason must be made faithful. And the God of the Bible is willing, eager and able to work that miracle of true wisdom through His Word. So put on your **wedding clothes** and let's go dancing with God through life to heaven. He'll supply the energy and the rhythm. It's not irrational at all. Joy in Jesus is the only way to live! Amen.