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Matthew 22:1-14

In Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a wedding banquet. “Many are called but few are chosen,” he says. Does this story give us permission to keep believing in the God who includes some people and rejects others?

However we interpret this parable we cannot embrace an interpretation that violates the person of Christ - he is the Word of God. He is the one in whom everyone has been made right with God and given eternal life (Rom. 5:18.) He is the one in whom the whole world has been reconciled to the Father (Col. 1:19-20.)

Whatever Jesus means he cannot be contradicting the reality of who he is as the person in whom all humanity exists (Heb. 1:2-3) and the person in whom all people (both Jews and Gentiles) have been made into one new humanity (Eph. 2:14-16). To be faithful to the person of Christ means to believe in the person who is the embodiment (literally) of the union between God and humanity, even when believing in him means we don't have all the answers.

In the light of Jesus, who is invited to the banquet? Since all things are reconciled in Jesus and he is the head of one new humanity, “the invited” is all of humanity.

The first word of the parable is inclusion. The Father says to the world “you are all included.” The Father excludes no one, but we all try to exclude ourselves with various excuses. He has to send out servants to persuade us to come in. The Father has to persuade us to come to a party and have fun! That's how sick we are.

Once the banquet starts there's one guy that wants to be there on his terms - wearing the clothes he wants, not what is appropriate to the banquet. When the Father excludes him he only does so to stop the guy from ruining the party.

This is a parable about faith. We are all included in the Son and all are destined for the party that is the wedding supper of the lamb. But we all don't believe and we all come up with excuses about why we don't want to believe and be there.

The lack of wedding clothes on the one guest represents the ultimate in not believing. He is so disbelieving that he doesn't even know he's at a wedding banquet.

This is the very definition of hell: to be in Christ, reconciled to the Father; and present at the wedding supper of the lamb, and to still not believe it! Such a disbelieving person will ruin the party so he has to be put away where he can do no harm.

Just like sometimes I have to send my 4-year old to his room when he is ruining dinner for the rest of the family by throwing food and running wild. When I hold him and put him in his room there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, but he never ceases to be my son and he never ceases to be included in the family and invited to the party.

In fact, at any time he can believe his inclusion and begin enjoying the party.

~ Jonathan Stepp