

Text: Matthew 22:1-14. It's time to build! Make time for God! **July 16, 2017.**

Grace and peace are yours through Jesus. Amen.

I'm so busy! I'm so busy! You hear that all the time, right? If I only had a dollar for every time I heard someone say, "I'm so busy!" I wouldn't be busy, because I wouldn't need to have a job, right? There's work and family stuff and we only made it up north once this summer. The kids should be less busy over the summer, but with baseball it sure doesn't seem like it. How can we make time for God? Well, consider this. Since the creation of the world, a day has always had 24 hours. So there's exactly the same amount of time as there used to be. It's just a question of, "What am I going to do with that time?" Let's listen to God's Word today to make time for God. Let's have the Word of Jesus help put our priorities in order so we make time for God. Make time for God.

It's a fascinating parable Jesus tells. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. A king, who represents God, throws a wedding party for his son. The Son represents Jesus. The wedding banquet represents heaven. Lots we could say about the wedding. First, note it's a wedding. God is inviting us to a wedding, a banquet. It's fun! Maybe we have this picture that heaven will be kind of boring, just sitting on a cloud strumming a harp all day. Or heaven is going to be like eternal church. Church already feels eternal. And that's all we are going to do, is be in church, for all eternity? Heaven won't be boring. Heaven will be fun. Heaven will be like the most fun wedding you've ever been to.

Weddings in those days were a blast. It was week-long party. A week-long party. You received an invitation a long time in advance, so you could plan to have a week off. Kind of like a save the date. It was a big deal to get invited. So it was really rude to turn the invitation down. Then when the date approached, someone would come and tell you, "It's time. It's all ready. Come and enjoy the week-long party." But as with most parables, there's a twist. They refused to come. They were unwilling. They rejected the invitation over and over and over. What? Who would do that? Turn down an invitation to a week-long party? Well... maybe I don't know anyone else there. Maybe I'll just feel guilty into bringing a nice gift. Weddings always look so much fun on TV, but in reality it's a lot of sitting around before the ceremony, during the pictures, waiting at the reception. It's kind of boring.

Well, the king was not going to be deterred. He wanted people to come to his wedding, just like God really, really wants us in heaven. So he sent more servants. "Didn't you guys hear me the first time. I've butchered oxen. I've prepared several fattened calves. This is going to be the best of the best. All for free. Come! Please! Come! I'm begging you! Come! Come to the wedding banquet!"

They paid no attention. They didn't care. They were unconcerned. They got the first invitation, like the save the date. They kind of ignored that. They heard the servants the first time. They refused. They heard them the second time and now it's like they are getting annoyed. They went somewhere else, anywhere else, field, business. Notice that word sounds like busy-ness. They were just too busy. This wedding just wasn't important enough. Too busy isn't a modern excuse. It's been around a while.

Do you see how strikingly similar that is to us? Every week God lays out a banquet here. His Word, sung and read and spoken. A special part of that word carefully cut for us, seasoned with the salt of God's law to sting us and at the same time seasoned with the gravy of God's gospel to comfort us, fill us up, lift our eyes to the wedding banquet of heaven. And how often have we said, "I'm too busy"? Every day, God's Word sits right on the shelf, right on the phone. And while we have time for 108 emails and 94 texts and can provide 26 facebook updates, and get started on the new season of our favorite show, when it comes to updating our knowledge of God's Word, too busy!

At least we aren't as rude as these guests, right? They seized and with great hubris and arrogance, they

mistreated and even killed the servants. What? Why blame the servants? They were just messengers. But if someone loved you enough to encourage you to make more time for God, how would you react? What if a Christian friend, in the most loving, gentle and kind way, encouraged you, "Would you come to Bible class with me? It really builds up my faith to not only hear God's Word, but to discuss with my fellow believers"? How would you react?

After the first refusal, the second refusal, the third refusal and the arrogant and insulting mistreatment of the messengers and oh yeah, they killed a few of them, the king shows his other side. An army comes, destroys those murderers and burns their city. Makes you think of the burning fires of hell, doesn't it? He even says, "Those I invited did not deserve to come." I had to wrestle with that. So allow a little explanation. Those who refused the invitation did not deserve it. They were not worthy. The king doesn't say, "Those who accept the invitation are worthy." He simply says, "Those who refuse it did not deserve it." Honestly, no one deserves it. We're all sinful. But refuse the invitation and then you are unworthy. They were not invited because they were worthy. They were worthy because they were invited. But when they refused that invitation, again and again and again, where did they end up? Unworthy! Destroyed! Burned!

And yet the king did not give up. The food is ready. There's still empty seats. Forget about the original guest list. Invite anyone you find. The servants went out to the streets. They just brought together anyone they could find. These servants, who stand for God's messengers, went beyond that original city of Jerusalem. They went beyond the original area of Israel. They went to Greece and Italy and Sweden and France and Germany. And from there they went to Africa and South America and America and even to Wisconsin. His call, his invitation to the heavenly banquet, made it all the way to you. Jesus was never too busy for you. In fact, Jesus got busy living a perfect life, so the perfection you could never have on your own, was given to you, as a free gift. Who would turn down the free gift of perfection? Jesus got busy dying, dying on a cross to forgive your sins of, "I'm too busy." Jesus couldn't stand the thought of heaven with you, so he rose from the dead and paved the path to heaven and engraved an invitation with your name on it, an invitation in baptism that is personalized and permanent. Who would turn down that free gift of forgiveness? Who would turn down that free gift of personalized and permanent perfection in paradise?

Well, what if you thought you didn't need it? What if you thought you didn't need perfection because, "Well, I'm already a pretty good person"? What if you thought you didn't need forgiveness, because, "Well, come on, I haven't messed up that badly." Meet the man not wearing wedding clothes. It was customary for the wedding banquet host to provide guests with special clothes to wear during the week-long party. Especially in this instance, when people were literally dragged off the streets and probably not dressed for a wedding, the king would have provided brand new, fancy clothes. Like giving every one a new dress or tuxedo. The wedding clothes stand for the perfect righteousness Jesus has given us. This perfect righteousness covers us so God can't see our sins and so God can only see the perfect righteousness, or holiness that Jesus has given us.

It's so cool, that the king gave what he demanded. He demanded the proper clothes to be at the wedding party. Then he provided those clothes free of charge. Just like God demanded perfection and when we couldn't give it to him, he provided it, free of charge, in Jesus, on the cross! Like a fancy restaurant that says, "Men must wear a jacket to be admitted into the dining room. But if you don't have a jacket, one will be provided for you." The host is too fair to lower his standards, but too kind to deny you entrance. So he gives what he demands. Just like God gives what he demands.

Now there was one guy we are told about, who refused these clothes. Why refuse? Figured, "What I'm

wearing is good enough! I don't need those clothes from the host. I'm fine with my own clothes." But the king noticed this man without the wedding clothes. It's interesting that only the king noticed the man without wedding clothes. Hmm? Emphasizing that only God can see into the heart and see faith. This man without wedding clothes stands for a hypocrite, someone who says one thing and does another. This man stands for those who are outwardly connected to Jesus. Go to church, give offerings, etc., etc. But in their hearts are thinking, "I'm pretty good on my own." For them, it's all a show. And that hypocrite is alive in my heart, and yours too.

Maybe you've been happy that pastor is letting everyone else have it today, all those bad church members who don't make as much time for God as I do, all those people who don't go to Bible class, don't clean, don't show up for meetings. Look at how the king treated such self-righteous people. "Friend," he asked. Sounds like a friendly word, but every time it's used in the Bible, it's used for a hypocrite, someone putting on a show. The king is using a kind word. He's not calling him a jerk. But he is pointing out his sin of hypocrisy. And to the question, "How did you get in here without wedding clothes?" He was speechless. He had nothing to say. He had no good works that gained him entrance. He had fooled people on earth. But he could not fool God. He got the worst treatment. Bound hand and foot and cast outside. This time it was personal. Into the darkness, outside. Where the pain of hell, away from God is so terrible, people are weeping and gnashing their teeth, for all eternity.

Yeah, there's a happy ending! Well, there's a serious warning. Be too busy for God and you will be destroyed. Think you can get to heaven on your own and you'll be weeping and gnashing your teeth. But my friends, and here I really mean friends. God wants so much better for you. Jesus made a life time for you. He lived for you to give you perfection. He died for you to remove all your sins. He rose to open and assure your place in heaven. He baptized you to wrap you up in personalized and permanent perfection. Don't be too busy for God. Five minutes a day, day after day, reading your Bible, spending that time listening to God can really make a difference. It did for me. Taking that extra hour or even just 30 minutes for Bible study can really help to wrap you up in that robe of perfection and prevent you from becoming self-righteous. Make time for God. It's worth it. Make time for God. It's a time investment that lasts for eternity. Amen.