

引言 INTRODUCTION

When there is a party, there will be food. I remember the first time I went to a banquet. There was food – lots of it! As a kid, I felt as if Disneyland was brought to the table. I kept eating, and the food kept coming. I thought: “Goodness! How many more dishes will there be? My tummy is about to burst.” When I got older, a Chinese banquet like that is no longer a surprise. You can guess what food will be served. People may have extreme feelings when it comes to such an occasion. Some grumble that they are invited, because they have to prepare a monetary gift. Cantonese folks call those invitations “red bombs.” Whereas, some others feel bad if they are not invited. They complain that the hosts do not show them enough face. Yes, some people are hard to please. Regardless of how the guests may react, the hosts show their hospitality by treating relatives and friends a great meal. The participants should feel honored to sit at the tables. The Bible says God has prepared a celebration too. The book of Revelation calls it the wedding feast of the Lamb. Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, will forever be united with His bride, the church. That congregation will consist of believers from all over the world and throughout human history. No one knows what will be on the menu. Without a doubt, God only provides us the best. But the most important part is not eating, but joining the party. The parable we will study today tells us that God looks for guests to come to that celebration. He has sent out His invitation. Will you be there? Here is the lesson for us: we must receive God’s invitation by responding to Him.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 蒙邀請 The Invited

There were three groups of people in the story. I will describe the first batch as the invited. A king had prepared a wedding feast for his son. At that time, a host would send out announcements twice. Nowadays, we call the first notice a “save the date” note. People are asked to do an RSVP to indicate their availability. That will help the host estimate how many tables to set up and how much food to prepare. In Jesus’ time, the guests were informed of the date of the event, but they did not know the exact starting time. Therefore, they would receive a second notice when the food was ready. That is the backdrop of the parable. Verse 3 tells us that the invited guests refused to come. The king then dispatched more servants, reminding the guests that steak would be served. Those people were not moved by the delicacies. Worse still, there were confrontations. Look at verses 5-7: **5 “But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.”** Some people ignored the messages and minded their own businesses. Others humiliated and even killed the messengers. All of them agreed to come at first, but they changed their mind later. Their refusal at the last moment dishonored the king. The second group suffered consequences for their violent actions. The king in his rage got rid of both the evil-doers and their city. Disobeying the king’s command and killing his servants would be seen as acts of insurrection. Therefore, the king had to punish those wicked people. What lessons did Jesus try to convey? His audience was mainly the Jews, including the religious leaders. One chapter ago,

Jesus entered Jerusalem the last time on His way to the cross. Today, we call that day the Palm Sunday. Afterward, Jesus turned over merchants' tables at the temple court. He rebuked people for making the place of worship into a marketplace. That triggered an argument with the religious leaders. In response, Jesus told three consecutive parables. At the end of the second story, Matthew 21:45 tells us: **When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.** Jesus used parables to reveal the problems of those teachers. They witnessed God's power in Jesus. But they rejected that Jesus was the Son of God, so much so that they even conspired to kill Him. Our story today was the third parable. At that time, the Jews saw themselves as God's chosen people. In their traditional teaching, there would be a coming celebration in heaven. They thought being Jews would automatically qualify them for the feast. However, many of them rejected God's message of salvation. Others even killed God's messengers such as the Old Testament prophets. The Jews were invited to the heavenly party, but they refuse to attend. Knowing that there will be a reward is not enough if one does not accept it. Suppose your credit card company announces about a sweepstake. The more you use the card, the higher the chance to win. If you are like me who never win anything big in life, you will ignore the promotion. By odd coincidence, you receive a letter in the mail telling you that you get the grand prize. It is a week-long cruise trip. Air tickets, hotel, food and everything else will be covered. All you have to do is to make a phone call and claim the gift. It is yours if you go get it. Nowadays, many people say they believe there may be a God. They also think that perhaps there is a heaven. However, merely thinking about heaven will not get you there. You must receive God's invitation of salvation. Jesus had paid for your sins. You have to accept God's grace by a simple faith. The Bible says whoever confess their sin and make Jesus their Savior and Lord will be saved. The blessing is yours if you claim it.

2. 得接納 The Included

In the parable, the invited guests did not actually get in because they chose not to come. Those who ended up sitting at the tables were the included. The food was ready but there were still plenty of empty seats. The king could have asked the servants to box the extra food and deliver it to people's homes. But a party was not just about eating, but more importantly, the celebration. Remember it was a wedding. It would not be fun to have only a handful of guests in the banquet hall. The king would feel honored if the room was fully packed. The atmosphere would be a whole lot better too. For the same reason, some people are willing to pay a high ticket price to attend a concert or a sport event. For me, I would rather go cheap, stay home and watch the show on TV. In verses 9-10, the king gave orders to resolve the situation: **9 "Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find." 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.** The mission is simple: invite as many people as the servants could find to fill all the seats. The message was straightforward: "Hey, the king throws a wedding party. There will be great food. Do you want to enjoy a free dinner?" No use of force was indicated, and so we can assume that those people came willingly. Notice the servants went to the streets. They did not knock on people's doors. It implies that some of those included could be beggars or even homeless people. Verse 10 states that those included "bad and good" people. But in what sense? It could mean healthy versus disabled people if Jesus was talking about their physical conditions. They consisted of upright citizens and bad guys if Jesus was describing their moral conducts. In either case, it refers to anyone. The servants did not check their background. They were accepted

regardless of their social and economic status. How would you think if you were one of them? I would be excited to say the least. Who am I to join the king's guests and to enjoy the best meal of a lifetime? The host demonstrated his hospitality and generosity. That is how God treats us. No one is qualified to receive His salvation grace. But yet God willingly calls people to come home. Jesus says in Luke 19:10 – **“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** The “Son of Man” is a usual title Jesus addressed Himself in the gospels. Jesus made that remark after He accepted Zacchaeus, a notorious tax-collector. In today's term, we say that Zacchaeus was saved. Jesus welcomed the man not because he was rich. Jesus received him despite the fact that he cheated his fellow Jews of their money. Jesus did not come to save good people, for there is none in the world based on God's perfect standard. Jesus only looks for sinners. It does not matter if you are the least or the last, because Jesus only saves the lost. His salvation grace is available to every person. You can become a believer not because you are richer, smarter or better-looking than others. It is exclusively, totally and completely God's grace. But you must say yes when God sends you an invitation. Just like the king sent out servants to call people, God dispatches His messengers to share the gospel. There are missionaries going to foreign countries, there are Christians devoted to particular people like college students, prisoners or refugees. God also sent someone to tell you about Jesus. God also gives you the privilege to tell others about Jesus. You do not need to go overseas, but will you go to your next door neighbor or a coworker sitting at the next desk? You do not need to venture into dangerous areas of the city, but will you take the gospel to a gym or a friend's home? We started “Project Plus One” few weeks ago. A few brothers and sisters putting names of seekers on the board in the hallway. You can join them too. It is a glorious duty to represent the Heavenly King and gather people for the future feast.

3. 被定罪 The Indicted

So far we see that the invited were unwilling to attend the king's feast. The included became the replacement guests. Now all the seats were filled. While the party was about start, there was a sudden twist in the story. One guest was indicted for not following proper customs. Look at verses 11-12: **11 “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.”** The king was being unreasonable. That guy was pulled from the street at the last minute. How could he find the time to change to nicer clothes? By “wedding garment” it is not a tuxedo or an elegant dress. At that time, a wealthy host would prepare some clean robes for the guests to cover their worn and dusty clothes. The man in the parable was indicted because he disobeyed the king. We follow a similar social custom today. You can wear shorts when going to a friend's home for barbeque. But formal wear is expected for a banquet. In my childhood days, some people had special “banquet attire” that were reserved for such an event. You show respect to the occasion and to the host by what you wear. The indicted guest suffered serious consequences as a result. Verse 13 says: **“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”** That poor fellow was punished. Jesus uses the same expression of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” seven times in the gospels. They depict scenes where people are excluded from God's blessing, and they even face God's judgment. Evidently, the parable is about salvation. Sitting at the king's table symbolizes being admitted to the heavenly feast. How do we interpret that the man was on a seat for some time, but was expelled at the next moment? The Bible teaches us that once we are saved, we are forever saved. The man in the parable

represents many people who want to go to heaven on their own terms. They mistakenly believe that by doing good works, saying a sinner's prayer or receiving baptism can save them. What is their basis? If we want to get into the heavenly feast, we must follow the King's rules. Acts 4:12 says it clearly: **“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** Whose name is that? Jesus Christ is the only middle-person who can lead to the Father. We must be covered by the blood of Jesus like putting on a royal robe. But going to heaven is the result and not the reason for getting saved. After all, why do you want to spend eternity with God if you do not like to spend time with Him now? What kind of heaven will it be to live forever with a God you do not love? Therefore, future heavenly guests must live like heavenly citizens today! Some of you were born in an overseas country. Later, you filed an application and got a green card, and subsequently became a U.S. citizen. You enjoy a lot of benefits with that status. But you must also fulfill some obligations. You pay taxes and serve jury duties. In an extreme case, you must fight for this country if you are drafted to war. Being a heavenly citizen is similar to that. God gives you some responsibilities as a disciple of Jesus. Living by Biblical principles, attending church and serving in ministries will not save you. You do those things after you are saved because you love God. Take it easy and wait for your turn to go to heaven is contrary to God's desire. Pay the price to follow Jesus is a foreign and even an offensive message to people today. But the world operates by the same principle. Getting admission to a famous college does not mean you will surely graduate. Receiving a job offer from a large company does not guarantee a successful career. Buying a gym membership cannot assure you a healthy body. You do not just get in. You must work hard to stay in! Likewise, God wants us to start right, as much as finish strong. Blessed are those who obey Him.

結論 CONCLUSION

Jesus gives His concluding remark in verse 14: **“For many are called, but few are chosen.”** The Lord does not intend to start a debate whether salvation is a result of human freewill or God's choice. We see both factors in the parable. The king sent servants to invite guests. Some people came, others rejected the offer. To a certain extent, God gives us the freedom to make a decision. We must receive God's invitation by responding to Him. God welcomes you today if you are not a believer. You must receive Jesus by faith like putting on a robe God prepares for you. The future banquet is not a memorial service to remember Jesus' death. It will be a celebration with millions of Christians for His victory. It is not a potluck where you need to bring some food. It will be an all-you-can-eat wedding feast. You come not as a waiter to serve at the table. You attend the party as a guest. The banquet is ready. Will you come?

引言 INTRODUCTION

有派對，就會有食物。我記得我第一次去參加宴會的經歷。有食物供應，而且是很多食物！當時我還是個小孩，我感覺好像迪士尼樂園被搬到餐桌上。我一邊猛吃，侍應不斷上菜。我想：「天哪！還有幾樣菜？我的肚皮快要被撐破了。等我長大之後，這樣的宴會就不再有什麼稀奇了。你也可以猜到有什麼食物。當人們遇到這樣的場合時，可能會有極端的反應。有些人埋怨他們被邀請，因為他們必須準備禮金。廣東人稱之為「紅色炸彈」。另外，有些沒有收到邀請的人就會生氣。他們抱怨主人沒有給他們面子。是的，有些人很難被討好。無論客人的反應如何，主人都會以熱情款待親朋好友。參加的人應該感到很榮幸。聖經說神也準備了一場盛大的宴會。啟示錄稱之為羔羊的婚宴。耶穌是被獻上的羔羊，祂將永遠與新娘，就是教會結合。教會的成員是來自世界各地和整個人類歷史的信徒。沒有人知道菜單上有什麼。但是毫無疑問，神只會給我們最好的東西。但重點不是吃飯，而是出席聚會。我們今天要學習的比喻告訴我們，神正在尋找賓客來參加那個慶典。祂已經發出了邀請。到時你會在那裡嗎？我們可以從這個比喻學到一個功課：我們必須透過回應神來接受祂的邀請。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 蒙邀請 The Invited

這個故事裡共有三批人。我稱第一批人為蒙邀請的人。有一個王為他的兒子準備了婚宴。當時宴會的主人會發兩次通告。今天，一些主人家會提前發第一個通知請賓客預留日期。人們會回覆以表示他們能否出席。這樣主人便可以估計要擺放多少張桌子以及要準備多少食物。在耶穌時代，賓客知道宴會的日期，但他們不知道確實的開始時間。因此，當食物準備好的時候，他們會收到第二次通知。這就是這個比喻的背景。第3節告訴我們，那些蒙邀請的賓客拒絕來赴宴。王隨後又打發更多僕人，提醒賓客菜單上有牛排。那些人並沒有被美食所吸引。更糟的是，還發生了衝突。請看第5-7節：**5 那些人不理就走了；一個到自己田裡去；一個做買賣去；6 其餘的拿住僕人，凌辱他們，把他們殺了。7 王就大怒，發兵除滅那些兇手，燒燬他們的城。**有些人不理通知，只顧自己的事。還有人羞辱甚至殺害僕人。起初他們都同意來，但後來又改變了主意。他們臨時的拒絕使王失去面子。結果使用武力的人受到懲罰。王在盛怒之下，幹

掉那些兇手並燒燬他們的城市。不服從王的命令並殺死他的僕人就等同於叛亂。因此，王必須對付那些壞人。耶穌要傳達什麼信息？祂的聽眾主要是猶太人，包括一些宗教領袖。前一章說耶穌最後一次進入耶路撒冷，走向十字架。今天，我們稱那一天為棕櫚主日。隨後，耶穌在聖殿外院推翻了商人的桌子。祂責備他們把敬拜的場所變成了市場。於是宗教領袖與耶穌起了爭論。作為回應，耶穌連續講了三個比喻。耶穌講完第二個比喻之後，馬太福音 21:45 記載：**祭司長和法利賽人聽見他的比喻，就看出他是指著他們說的。**耶穌用比喻來揭開那些教師的問題。他們從耶穌身上看到了神的大能。但他們拒絕承認耶穌是神的兒子，甚至計劃要殺害他。我們今天的故事是第三個比喻。當時的猶太人認為自己是神的選民。在他們的傳統教導中，天堂裡將會有一場慶祝活動。他們覺得身為猶太人就自動有資格參加那個盛宴。然而，他們中的許多人拒絕接受神拯救的信息。有些人甚至殺死神的使者，包括舊約的先知。猶太人蒙邀請參加天上的慶祝，但他們卻拒絕出席。只是知道但不接受禮物是沒用的。假設你的信用卡公司宣布進行抽獎活動。使用卡的次數越多，中獎的機會就越高。如果你像我一樣一輩子都從未贏過任何大獎，你就不會去理它。但是很巧合，你收到一封信，告訴你中了頭獎。那是一個星期的遊輪旅行。機票、住宿、吃飯通通都免費。你所要做的就是打電話去領獎。只要你付出行動，禮物就是你的。如今，許多人說他們相信可能有神。他們也認為可能有天堂。然而，純粹想著天堂並不能讓你進去。你必須接受神的邀請。耶穌已經償還了你的罪，你只需要以單純的信心接受神的恩典。聖經說，凡承認自己的罪並接受耶穌為救主和生命的主的人都會得救。如果你願意接受的話，這個祝福就是你的。

2. 得接納 The Included

在比喻中，蒙邀請的賓客並沒有進到宴會裡，因為他們選擇不去。那些最終坐在桌上的人是那些得接納的人。食物已經準備好了，但還有很多空位。王本來可以讓僕人把多餘的食物打包，然後送到各家。但開派對不只是為了吃飯，更重要的是慶祝。記得那是一場婚禮。宴會廳裡只有幾隻小猫，那多沒意思。如果房間擠滿了人，王會感到很有面子，整個氣氛也會不一樣。基於同樣的原因，有些人願意花高價去看音樂會或球賽。我這個小器鬼則寧願看免費的電視轉播。在第 9 至 10 節中，王下令解決當前的局面：**9 『所以你們要往岔路口上去，凡遇見的，都召來赴席。』 10 那些僕人就出去，到大路上，凡遇見的，不論善惡都召聚了來，筵席上就坐滿了客。**任務很簡單：僕人盡量去找人來填滿所有的座位。他們的訊息很直接：「大家聽啊！王為他的兒子準備了婚宴，會有很好吃的食物。有誰想要吃一頓免費晚餐？」經文沒有說他們使用武力，因此我們可以假設那些人是自願來的。注意僕人們是沿途發出邀請，他們沒有敲人

的門。這暗示其中一些賓客可能是乞丐，甚至是流浪漢。第 10 節指出，那些人包括善惡，意思是好與壞的人。但是在什麼意義上呢？如果耶穌談論的是身體狀況的話，那麼祂指的是健康的人與殘疾人士。如果耶穌描述的人的道德行為，那麼他們便包括良好公民和壞蛋。無論是哪種情況，都包括任何人。僕人沒有做背景檢查。不論他們的社會地位和經濟狀況如何，他們都被接納。如果你是他們其中一人，你會有什麼感受？我肯定很興奮。我是誰，竟然能成為王的賓客並享受一生中最好的一頓飯？主人表現出他的熱情好客和慷慨。神就是這樣招待我們的。沒有人有資格得到救恩，但神卻樂意呼召人回家。耶穌在路加福音 19:10 說：「人子來，為要尋找，拯救失喪的人。」「人子」是耶穌在福音書中最常用的自稱。耶穌在接受惡名昭彰的稅吏撒該之後說了這句話。用今天的話來說，撒該得救了。耶穌歡迎他並不是因為他富有。儘管他欺騙了猶太同胞的金錢，但耶穌還是接納他。耶穌來不是為了拯救好人，因為世界上沒有人能達到神完美的標準。耶穌只尋找罪人。無論你是最小的還是排最後的都沒關係，因為耶穌只拯救失喪的人。祂的救恩是每個人都可以得到的。你能成為信徒並不是因為你比別人更富有、更聰明或更漂亮。這完完全全是神的恩典。但當神向你發出邀請時，你必須回應。就像王差派僕人去找賓客一樣，神差派使者去傳福音。有宣教士到海外，也有基督徒針對特定的人群傳福音，例如：大學生、囚犯或難民等。神也派人來告訴你有關耶穌的事。神同樣給你榮幸向別人傳福音。你不需要出國，但你願意接觸你的鄰居或隔壁的同事嗎？你不需要進去一些治安不好的區域，但是你願意把福音帶到健身房或朋友家嗎？我們幾週前開始了「加一計劃」。一些弟兄姐妹把福音朋友的名字放在走廊的佈告板上。你可以加入這個行動。代表天上的王邀請人來赴宴，那是多麼光榮的事情。

3. 被定罪 The Indicted

到目前為止，我們看到蒙邀請的人不願意參加王的宴會。那些得接納的人成為代替的賓客。現在所有的座位都填滿了。正當晚會即將開始時，故事突然有了轉折。一位賓客因為沒有遵守適當的規則而被定罪。請看 11-12 節：11 王進來觀看賓客，見那裡有一個沒有穿禮服的，12 就對他說：『朋友，你到這裡來怎麼不穿禮服呢？』那人無言可答。王真是無理取鬧。那個人是臨時從街上拉進來的。他哪有時間換衣服？這裡的「禮服」並不是燕尾西裝或是女士的晚裝。那時候，有錢的主人會為賓客準備一些乾淨的袍子，用以蓋在破舊、沾滿灰塵的衣服上。比喻中的人因為違反王的規矩而被定罪。今天我們也遵循類似的習慣。你去朋友家烤肉時可以穿短褲，但是參加宴會就必須穿得隆重一點。在我小時候，一些人有一套體面的衣服只留在宴會中穿著。服裝表示你對場合和主人的尊重。被定罪的賓客面對嚴重的後果。第 13 節說：於是王對使喚的人說：

『捆起他的手腳來，把他丟在外邊的黑暗裡；在那裡必要哀哭切齒了。』耶穌在福音書中七次使用「哀哭切齒」這個用詞。它形容人被排除在神的祝福之外，甚至接受神的審判。顯然，這個比喻是關於救恩的。坐在王的桌上象徵著被允許參加天上的盛宴。那個人在座位上才坐了一會兒，然後又被趕出去，我們該如理解這個情形呢？聖經教導我們，一次得救，就永遠得救。比喻中的這個人代表許多想用自己的方法上天堂的人。他們錯誤地認為，透過做好事、唸一遍決志的禱告或接受浸禮就可以得救。他們的聖經根據在哪裡？如果我們想進到天上的筵席，就必須遵守天國君王的規矩。使徒行傳 4:12 清楚地說：「除他以外，別無拯救；因為在天下人間，沒有賜下別的名，我們可以靠著得救。」那是誰的名字？耶穌基督是唯一能帶領人到天父那裡去的中間人。我們必須被耶穌的寶血所遮蓋，就像穿上適合的袍子一樣。但是上天堂是得救的結果，而不是得救的原因。畢竟，如果你現在不喜歡與神同在，你為什麼想要與神共度永恆呢？與一個你不愛的神永遠在一起將會是什麼樣的天堂？因此，將來天國的賓客必須今天就活得像天國公民一樣！我們中的一些人是在外國出生的。後來，你申請到綠卡，隨後成為美國公民。因為這個身份，你可以享受許多福利。但是你也必須履行一些義務。例如你要交稅和做陪審員。在極端情況下，如果你被徵召，你必須為這個國家去打仗。成為天國公民也是一樣。作為耶穌的門徒，神給你一些責任。按照聖經的原則生活、來教會聚會和參與服事都不能使你得救。你得救之後做這些事情是因為你愛神。放輕鬆，等候輪到你上天堂是違反神的心意的。付代價來跟隨耶穌對現代人來說是一個陌生的、甚至是令人反感的消息。但是世界豈不是以同樣的方式運作嗎？考上名校並不代表你一定能畢業。被大公司聘請並不表示你能事業有成。成為健身房的會員並不能保證你擁有健康的身體。只踏進大門是不夠的，你還需要努力維持你的身份。同樣，神希望我們有好的開始，祂也希望我們能順利地結束。那些聽從祂的人是**有福的**。

結論 CONCLUSION

耶穌在第 14 節提出祂的總結：「**因為被召的人多，選上的人少。**」耶穌無意展開一場辯論，探討得救到底是根據人的自由意志還是神揀選的結果。我們在比喻中同時看到兩個因素。王差派僕人邀請賓客。有些人願意來，有些人拒絕。在某種程度上，神給了我們做決定的自由。我們必須透過回應神來接受祂的邀請。如果你還不是信徒，神今天也歡迎你。你必須憑信心接受耶穌，就像穿上神為你預備的袍子一樣。將來的宴會不是紀念耶穌去世的追悼會，那是與千千萬萬基督徒一起慶祝主的得勝。你不需要帶食物出席的聚餐，那將是一場自助餐的婚宴。你不是以侍應生的身份來為別人服務，你是參加聚會的賓客。宴會已經準備好了。你會來嗎？