

Matthew: 22:1–14

From Catena Aurea:

1. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,
2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.
4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.
5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:
6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
8. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.
9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.
10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.
11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. lxi.) Forasmuch as He had said, And it shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, He now proceeds to shew what nation that is.

GLOSS. (interlin.) Answered, that is, meeting their evil thoughts of putting Him to death.

AUGUSTINE. (de Cons. Ev. ii. 71.) This parable is related only by Matthew. Luke gives one like it, but it is not the same, as the order shews.

ORIGEN. The kingdom of heaven, in respect of Him who reigns there, is like a king; in respect of Him who shares the kingdom, it is like a king's son; in respect of those things which are in the kingdom, it is like servants and guests, and among them the king's armies. It is specified, A man that is a king, that what is spoken may be as by a man to men, and that a man may regulate men unwilling to be regulated by God. But the kingdom of heaven will then cease to be like a man, when zeal and contention and all other passions and sins having ceased, we shall cease to walk after men, and shall see Him as He is. For now we see Him not as He is, but as He has been made for us in our dispensation.

ORIGEN. Or, by the marriage of Bridegroom with Bride, that is, of Christ with the soul, understand the Assumption of the Word, the produce whereof is good works.

HILARY. Rightly has the Father already made this wedding, because this eternal union and espousal of the new body is already perfect in Christ.

JEROME. He sent his servant, without doubt Moses, by whom I le gave the Law, to those who had been invited. But if you read servants as most copies have, it must be referred to the Prophets, by whom they were invited, but neglected to come. By the servants who were sent the second time, we may better understand the Prophets than the Apostles; that is to say, if servant is read in the first place; but if 'servants,' then by the second servants are to be understood the Apostles;

ORIGEN. Or; The servants who were first sent to call them that were bidden to the wedding, are to be taken as the Prophets converting the people by their prophecy to the festival of the restoration of the Church to Christ. They who would not come at the first message are they who refused to hear the words of the Prophets. The others who were sent a second time were another assembly of Prophets.

HILARY. Or; The servants who were first sent to call them that were bidden, are the Apostles; they who, being before bidden, are now invited to come in, are the people of Israel, who had before been bidden

through the Law to the glories of eternity. To the Apostles therefore it belonged to remind those whom the Prophets had invited. Those sent with the second injunction are the Apostolic men their successors.

JEROME. The dinner that is prepared, the oxen and the fatlings that are killed, is either a description of regal magnificence by the way of metaphor, that by carnal things spiritual may be understood; or the greatness of the doctrines, and the manifold teaching of God in His law, may be understood.

HILARY. Or otherwise; The oxen are the glorious army of Martyrs, offered, like choice victims, for the confession of God; the fatlings are spiritual men, as birds fed for flight upon heavenly food, that they may fill others with the abundance of the food they have eaten.

ORIGEN. Or; The dinner which is prepared is the oracle of God; and so the more mighty of the oracles of God are the oxen; the sweet and pleasant are the fatlings. For if any one bring forward feeble words, without power, and not having strong force of reason, these are the lean things; the fatlings are when to the establishment of each proposition many examples are brought forward backed by reasonable proofs. For example, supposing one holding discourse of chastity, it might well be represented by the turtle-dove; but should he bring forward the same holy discourse full of reasonable proof out of Scripture, so as to delight and strengthen the mind of his hearer, then he brings the dove fatted.

GLOSS. (interlin.) Or, All things are now ready, i. e. The entrance into the kingdom, which had been hitherto closed, is now ready through faith in My incarnation.

CHRYSOSTOM. These occupations seem to be entirely reasonable; but we learn hence, that however necessary the things that take up our time, we ought to prefer spiritual things to every thing beside. But it seems to me that they only pretended these engagements as a cloak for their disregard of the invitation.

HILARY. For men are taken up with worldly ambition as with a farm; and many through covetousness are engrossed with trafficking.

JEROME. When He was doing works of mercy, and bidding to His marriage-feast, He was called a man; (homini regi) now when He comes to vengeance, the man is dropped, and He is called only a King.

ORIGEN. Let those who sin against the God of the Law, and the Prophets, and the whole creation, declare whether He who is here called man, and is said to be angry, is indeed the Father Himself. If they allow this, they will be forced to own that many things are said of Him applicable to the passible nature of man;

not for that He has passions, but because He is represented to us after the manner of passible human nature. In this way we take God's anger, repentance, and the other things of the like sort in the Prophets.

JEROME. By His armies we understand the Romans under Vespasian and Titus, who having slaughtered the inhabitants of Judæa, laid in ashes the faithless city.

ORIGEN. Or, the city of those wicked men is in each doctrine the assembly of those who meet in the wisdom of the rulers of this world; which the King sets fire to and destroys, as consisting of evil buildings.

ORIGEN. He saith to His servants, that is, to the Apostles; or to the Angels, who were set over the calling of the Gentiles, The wedding is ready.

JEROME. For the Gentile nation was not in the streets, but in the crossings of the streets.

HILARY. By the street also is to be understood the time of this world, and they are therefore bid to go to the crossings of the streets, because the past is remitted to all.

ORIGEN. Or otherwise; I suppose this first bidding to the wedding to have been a bidding of some of the more noble minds. For God would have those before all come to the feast of the divine oracles who are of the more ready wit to understand them; and forasmuch as they who are such are loth to come to that kind of summons, other servants are sent to move them to come, and to promise that they shall find the dinner prepared. For as in the things of the body, one is the bride, others the inviters to the feast, and they that are bidden are others again; so God knows the various ranks of souls, and their powers, and the reasons why these are taken into the condition of the Bride, others in the rank of the servants that call, and others among the number of those that are bidden as guests. But they who had been thus especially invited contemned the first inviters as poor in understanding, and went their way, following their own devices, as more delighting in them than in those things which the King by his servants promised. Yet are these more venial than they who ill-treat and put to death the servants sent unto them; those, that is, who daringly assail with weapons of contentious words the servants sent, who are unequal to solve their subtle difficulties, and those are illtreated or put to death by them. The servants going forth are either Christ's Apostles going from Judæa and Jerusalem, or the Holy Angels from the inner worlds, and going to the various ways of various manners, gathered together whomsoever they found, not caring whether before their calling they had been good or bad. By the good here we may understand simply the more humble and upright of those who come to the worship of God, to whom agreed what the Apostle says,

When the Gentiles which have not the Law do by nature the things contained in the Law, they are a law unto themselves. (Rom. 2:14.)

JEROME. For there is an infinite difference among the Gentiles themselves; some are more prone to vice, others are endowed with more incorrupt and virtuous manners.

ORIGEN. The marriage-feast of Christ and the Church is filled, when they who were found by the Apostles, being restored to God, sat down to the feast. But since it behoved that both bad and good should be called, not that the bad should continue bad, but that they should put off the garments unmeet for the wedding, and should put on the marriage garments, to wit, bowels of mercy and kindness, for this cause the King goes out, that He may see them set down before the supper is set before them, that they may be detained who have the wedding garment in which He is delighted, and that he may condemn the opposite.

ORIGEN. But when He was come in, He found there one who had not put off his old behaviour; He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. He speaks of one only, because all, who after faith continue to serve that wickedness which they had before the faith, are but of one kind.

AUGUSTINE. (cont. Faust. xxii. 19.) Or, he goes to the feast without a garment, who goes seeking his own, and not the Bridegroom's honour.

HILARY. Or; The wedding garment is the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the purity of that heavenly temper, which taken up on the confession of a good enquiry is to be preserved pure and unspotted for the company of the kingdom of heaven.

JEROME. Or; The marriage garment is the commandments of the Lord, and the works which are done under the Law and the Gospel, and form the clothing of the new man. Whoso among the Christian body shall be found in the day of judgment not to have these, is straightway condemned. He saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? He calls him friend, because he was invited to the wedding as being a friend by faith; but He charges him with want of manners in polluting by his filthy dress the elegance of the wedding entertainment.

ORIGEN. And forasmuch as he who is in sin, and puts not on the Lord Jesus Christ, has no excuse, it follows, But he was speechless.

JEROME. For in that day there will be no room for blustering manner¹, nor power of denial, when all the Angels and the world itself are witnesses against the sinner.

ORIGEN. He who has thus insulted the marriage feast is not only cast out therefrom, but besides by the King's officers, who are set over his prisons, is chained up from that power of walking which he employed not to walk to any good thing, and that power of reaching forth his hand, wherewith he had fulfilled no work for any good; and is sentenced to a place whence all light is banished, which is called outer darkness.

AUGUSTINE. (de Trin. xi. 6.) The bonds of wicked and depraved desires are the chains which bind him who deserves to be cast out into outer darkness.

JEROME. By a metaphor taken from the body, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, is shewn the greatness of the torments. The binding of the hands and feet also, and the weeping of eyes, and the gnashing of teeth, understand as proving the truth of the resurrection of the body.

JEROME. And because in the marriage and supper the chief thing is the end and not the beginning, therefore He adds, For many are called, but few chosen.

HILARY. For to invite all without exception is a courtesy of public benevolence; but out of the invited or called, the election will be of worth, by distinction of merit.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

22:1–2 The Kingdom of Heaven is Like a Marriage Feast

22:3–4 Come to the Marriage Feast

Everything Is Ready.

Augustine: All the faithful know the story of the marriage of the king's son, and his feast. They know that the Lord's table is open to all who are willing correctly to receive it. But it is important that each one examines how he approaches, even when he is not forbidden to approach.

The holy Scriptures teach us that there are two feasts of the Lord: one to which the good and evil come, the other to which the evil do not come. So then the feast of which we have just now heard when the gospel was being read has both good and evil guests. All who excused themselves from this feast are

evil, but not all those who entered in are good. I now address you, therefore, who are the good guests at this feast. You are taking careful note of the words “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.” It is to you I speak. I plead with you not to look vainly for the good apart from the church but to bear with the evil within it. Sermon 90.1.

22:5–7 Rejecting the Invitation, Persecuting the Messengers

22:8 The Invited Guests Unworthy

Those Invited Were Not Worthy.

Augustine: But someone will object, This is strange. What great matter is it that one man among this large crowd does not have a wedding garment? Why rivet attention on this one man? So what if he creeps in unperceived by the servants of the householder? How could it be said that because of just that one, “they invited in both good and bad together”? Attend therefore, beloved, and understand. This man represents a whole class of persons of whom there are many. Sermon 90.4.

22:9–10 Gathering All Whom the Servants Found

22:11 A Guest with No Wedding Garment

22:12 The Guest Speechless

Without a Wedding Garment.

Augustine: Note that “the master of the house came in to look at the guests.” See, my beloved, the servants’ business was only to invite and bring in the good and bad. It is not said that the servants took notice of the guests, found among them a man who had no wedding garment and spoke to him. This is not written. The master of the house came in, the master saw him, the master of the house inspected, the master of the house hauled him off and threw him out. It is not fitting to pass over this quickly. But I have undertaken to establish another point, how that one man stands for many. “But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.” For the one who questioned him was one to whom he could give no deceptive reply. Sermon 90.4.

22:13 Cast into Outer Darkness

Cast Him Out.

Augustine: The garment that is required is in the heart, not on the body, for if it had been put on externally, it could not have been concealed even from the servants. But what is the wedding garment that must be put on? We learn it from these words, “May your priests be clothed with righteousness.” It is of that garment of righteousness that the apostle speaks when he says, “Because when we are clothed, we are not found naked.” In this way the unprepared man was discovered by the Lord of the feast, interrogated, bound and thrown out, one from among the many. Sermon 90.4.

22:14 Many Called, Few Chosen

Those with the Garment of Charity.

Augustine: What is that wedding garment, then? This is the wedding garment: “The goal of this command is charity,” says the apostle, “which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” This is the wedding garment. Not charity of any kind whatever—for very often they who are partakers together of an evil conscience seem to love one another. Those who commit robberies together, who love the destructive arts of witchcraft, and who go to the coliseum together and join together in the shout of the chariot race or the wild beast fight—these too in some sense very often may be said to love one another.

But in these is no charity from a pure heart, a good conscience and a faith unfeigned. The wedding garment is charity such as this: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I have become like a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” Suppose someone who speaks in tongues comes in and is asked, “How did you get in here without a wedding garment?”

Suppose he answers, “But I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.” But if he has no charity, he has nothing. Such may be the clothing of those who in fact lack the wedding garment. “Though,” he says, “I have all these and have not Christ, I am nothing.” Is then “the gift of prophecy” nothing? Is then “the knowledge of mysteries” nothing? It is not that these are nothing. But “I, if I have them, and have not charity, am nothing.” Sermon 90.6.