

September 17, 2022

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our prayers are with Metropolitan Nicholas as he begins his service as the primate of our church. May God bless and protect him in the great work that he has been elected to perform.

MATTHEW 22:1-14

*And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,
The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.
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.
But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:
And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
But when the king heard there of, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those
murderers, and burned up their city.
Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.
Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.
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.
And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was
speechless.
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.
For many are called, but few are chosen.*

The last verse of the parable, *For many are called, but few are chosen*, is a message to us that is worth stopping and thinking about. Who are the many that are being called? Who are the chosen? What are they chosen for and what happens to those who are not chosen? And finally, what message is the Lord giving us through this verse?

First of all, who are the “many”? They are those *that were bidden to the wedding*. In fact, they were called more than once, but still refused to come. These “many” also included those who the servants of the king, the angels, *gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good*. In other words, those who were being called are **all** the people in the world. All of humanity, all people of all times are being called to the wedding.

What is this wedding, and who is the king and his son who are calling all of humanity to their celebration? The king, of course, is God, and the son is our Savior. The wedding, as is revealed in the beginning of the parable, is the Kingdom of God. Thus, we have here a definite confirmation that God desires that all people, without exception, be saved.

Who then are the chosen? Despite “many” being called to salvation, only a few are chosen for it. These few are that part of humanity that will be saved. They are chosen by God because they chose to be with God and live in a God-pleasing way on earth, helped by “his servants”. So, the choice is a mutual choice, not one solely made by God.

The sad reality is that most of humanity will choose to reject God no matter how many times God calls them. As the parable shows us, some will choose the world over God, while others will violently reject Him outright. *But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.* Therefore, God honors their free will by not choosing them.

The last question that we can look at then is this: what is the Lord telling each one of us personally through this verse? We should attentively look at the guest who was *cast into outer darkness* and ask, “Why was he cast out?” It was for not wearing a “wedding garment”. What then does this wedding garment represent? It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that a person collects during his life on earth by living a God-pleasing life.

An excellent example of a person wearing this garment is St. Seraphim of Sarov. When he was once questioned concerning salvation by a man named Motovilov, he answered by shining brighter than created light, so much so that Motovilov could not see him through the brightness. This is how each person can be changed by grace of the Holy Spirit, by living a God-pleasing life. Evidently, the man in the parable was not dressed in a wedding garment because His life was not full of light.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the fate of this man is a warning to us. Each one of us will wind up sharing his fate if we come to the wedding feast unprepared, not wearing the proper wedding garment when we face our Savior at the last judgment. There can be no doubt that the Savior wants us to be saved. He repeatedly calls us to repent during our life. He consistently offers us His help through the Holy Spirit. The rest is up to us. Will we repent? Will we accept His constant help? Will we use it correctly? Without our cooperation, God cannot save us. But if we cooperate and work with Him, salvation is guaranteed. Therefore, since death can come at any minute and close the door to salvation, let us not procrastinate.

With Much Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar