

引言 INTRODUCTION

I hope you had an enjoyable Thanksgiving dinner with your family this past Thursday. My family had a roasted duck instead of a turkey. The parable we will study today has to do with a big feast. Jesus taught this parable during the last week of His earthly life. He was about to go to the cross. Opposition to Jesus was escalating. The Jewish religious leaders knew that Jesus was the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament. But they did not want Him to be their Lord. Jesus thus used this parable to convict the leaders for rejecting Him. Jesus told a very similar parable in Luke 14. The plot has some key differences. A host prepared a banquet. Some of the invited guests cited various excuses and refused to come. The master of the house thus sent servants to bring in two waves of guests to fill up the seats. Bible scholars debated whether the two parables are the same. In our discussion, I agree that the two stories complement each other. Both parables use the picture of a big feast to depict entry into the Kingdom of God. That imagery has its Old Testament foundation. The Jews look forward to a huge celebration with God in eternity. Eating with friends and family members denote joy and fellowship in any culture. How much more delightful it will be to sit down at God's table! The critical question is: who will have a seat to God's feast?

解釋 EXPLANATION

The first thing we need to ascertain is who the direct audience of this parable were. Who were the "them" in verse 1? We can assume that this chapter is a continuation of the previous one. Matthew 21:45 indicates that Jesus was having a conversation with the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were the Jewish religious leaders at that time. In the closing section of chapter 21, Jesus told a parable to condemn those leaders for rejecting Him. In that parable, some tenants of a vineyard refused to pay rent to the owner. After multiple failed attempts, the master finally dispatched his own son to the field, thinking that the renters would respect him. But those wicked people reasoned that the son would inherit the property. Therefore, they killed him. The moral of the story is in **21:43** – "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Again, the "you" in this verse refers to the religious leaders. The symbolism is obvious. The owner was the Heavenly Father, the son was Jesus and the renters were the religious leaders. Those elites rejected Jesus to a degree that they were plotting to kill Him. As a result, the privilege to enter into God's Kingdom was granted to others. In the parable that we shall study today, there is a same motif of denying God's invitation. Hence, we can deduce that Jesus carried over His indictment of the leaders for rejecting Him. There were three groups of people in the parable. Only one of them were admitted to the banquet. In other words, they were the only people who were saved.

In the story, a king prepared a wedding banquet for his son. When the celebration was about to begin, the king sent some servants to gather the invited guests. But they refused to come. A little background here can help us understand the circumstance. At that time, a banquet was commonly held at night. Perhaps a host waited till everyone had completed their work before starting a party. An invitation would be sent way ahead of time. Nowadays, it is also common for

a bride and groom to give a “save the date” notice before they mail a formal invitation card. The purpose is the same. The potential guests can decide whether or not to accept the invitation. If they intend to join the occasion, they will circle the date in their calendars. Otherwise, they will respond that they cannot come. That will help the host estimate how many guests will be there. Back in the old days, people had a more flexible schedule. They knew a party would take place on a certain day. But they did not know the exact time. Therefore, the host would ask his servants to knock on people’s doors when the food was ready. That was exactly what happened in the parable. How did the guests react? Read **verses 5-6**: 5 “But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.” Some of the people ignored the messengers, others even turned violent and murdered the servants! Those guests said yes earlier but now they changed their mind. It would be an utmost insult to the king for them to skip the feast.

I would call this group of people the “refused.” They represented the Jews who refused God’s salvation grace. They knew the banquet was coming, but they refused to go when the moment arrived. Why refused? They were occupied by their own agendas. In Luke’s version of the parable, those who refused to attend the dinner gave similar excuses. One person said he had to go check on a field he just purchased. Another man needed to examine a few oxen he bought. Then a third guy told the host that he could not come because he just got married. All those were inexcusable excuses. Often when you invite someone to come to church, the person tells you: “I shall see if I may have time,” or “I will try to make it.” Those are some polite ways to say no. In Jesus’ time, most people were ordinary peasants. It was rare for them to have a sizeable feast. This king had prepared some fancy beef dishes. It will be like Angus ribeye steak and Szechuan beef hotpot nowadays. But the guests were not interested. It was disrespectful to refuse the invitation. But why killed the servants? That action depicts how some Jews had treated God’s messengers. In Matthew 23, Jesus indicted the hypocritical teachers of the Law with seven “woes.” One of the woes had to do with killing God’s prophets. Jesus lamented in **23:37** – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” The religious leaders were a microcosm of the whole Israel that had been rejecting God. They disliked the messengers because they disliked the messages about sin and repentance. Some people who killed God’s servants suffered an immediate judgment. In the parable, the king sent troops to eliminate the murderers and burn down their cities. God declared judgment to His people who deliberately disobeyed Him in the Old Testament times. Some of them perished, and other went on exile. God will retract His grace from those who reject His grace. Today who are the “refused?” They can be people who know something about the gospel. They may even be born into a Christian family. They have their own version of “heaven.” They think it will be great to get there. However, they are too busy with the things of this life. Compared to heaven, they find the here and now more real and appealing. It can be wealth, health, pleasure or something else they see as important. God sends out invitation to them through their Christian family members or friends. It may also be a movie scene, a celebrity’s salvation testimony or something happens around them that reminds them the frailty and uncertainty of life. God has been plucking their hearts. But they are too preoccupied with other priorities to respond to God’s invitation. Jesus’ message to them is: do not reject God’s invitation. If they refuse to come, the opportunity will go to other people.

That was how the story progressed. Since the food was ready, the banquet could not be postponed. The king thus asked some servants to go out and invite whoever they could gather. Read **verse 10**: “So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.” In Luke’s version, the servant went out twice because there were still empty seats after the first effort. It may only be a minor difference in the two parables. It showed that the host wanted to fill all the vacancies. It reflects God’s heart that He wishes to see as many people saved as possible. We may wonder what Matthew means by “good and bad” guests. **Luke 14:21** gives us a clue to their identities: “... ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’” In today’s terms, we call them social outcasts who live in under-privileged districts. They were “bad” in their economic status. The “good and bad” include the rich and poor, and people who are morally upright and those following a sinful lifestyle. Anyone could come regardless of their background. I call those guests the “responded.” The religious leaders must be astonished by the king’s generosity. He welcomed anyone who responded to his calling. When Jesus came into the world, He deliberately drew near to the poor, the sick, the demon-possessed, little children and women. Those were the very people the religious leaders despised because they had nothing. The poor could not afford a hefty price tag if God was to charge an admission fee to heaven. The patients were too weak to come on their own effort. The demon-possessed were in bondage. The kids and ladies were considered unimportant at that time. But they responded to Jesus’ offering of salvation grace when Jesus invited them. Every sinner is saved the same way. Jesus never asks us to check the credentials of the listeners when we share the gospel with them. No one in his/her own merits is qualified. Rather, we convey Jesus’ message: “The banquet is ready. Salvation is available to anyone who responds positively.”

The parable could have concluded here with a happy ending. The banquet was filled with people. Every guest was ready to eat joyfully. The king must feel that he preserved his face. But the story comes to an interesting twist. Look at **verses 11-12**: 11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.” We may think that the king was being unreasonable. That person got in at the last minute, not to mention that he might be from a modest background. Where could he borrow a tuxedo with such a short notice? In any culture, it shows respect to the host to dress up for a formal dinner. The man was speechless because he had no excuse for not following the convention. At that time, a host provided fine garment to guests who could not find any means to furnish themselves. Therefore, the man had no explanation why he did not grab some wedding clothes at the entrance. Failing to meet a minimum requirement will have a sad consequence. Continue to read **verse 13**: “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” He was being kicked out! The same expression of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” appears six times in Matthew and once in Luke. Without exception, it refers to a state of abandonment and judgment. In plain terms, people in that situation will be condemned forever. The man was already sitting in the banquet hall. But he was dragged out before he could enjoy the delicacies. Was Jesus saying that in the future some people will be expelled even after they have entered heaven? It is like someone traveling to another country. He has landed at the airport. Technically speaking, he is already in foreign soil. But a custom officer notices that the name on his passport does not match his visa. Therefore, he

is denied entry. The focus here was that the man was not qualified to sit at the table in the first place without a wedding garment. What does God require in those He invites to salvation?

In Luke's gospel, Jesus presented the cost to be His disciples right after he told the parable. One must be ready to give up everything, including his/her family, to become a follower of Jesus. The Lord is not asking us to leave our family, sell our possessions and quit our job. But when we accept Jesus into our hearts, we must surrender the ownership of our life to Him. When we address Jesus as our Lord, we give Him the full right to handle our life the way He sees fit. We trust that God knows us far better than we know ourselves. We have faith that God has a higher will even when things do not happen the way we prefer. I will call the ejected guest in the parable the "rejected." He represented those who want to go to heaven on their own terms. There are many people like that in this world. They want to become Christians the easy way. They find it too demanding to attend church meetings, to read Bible daily and to contribute monetary offering. Let us be clear, doing all that can never save anyone. But is there any proof if you say you are a Christian? Do you show any submission to God's command in the Bible? You may argue: "Nah, God doesn't care too much about formality. He looks at my heart." But do your actions verify your heart? Say an employee is sitting in his office. But he does nothing his boss assigns him to do. He trades stocks and plays computer games all day. He does wear a company badge. Can you seriously consider him a part of the company? A relative of mine works for a domestic car manufacturer. He told me that if any worker dares to drive a foreign-made car, more than likely it will be keyed. If you say you are loyal to a company, then you need to show it! Becoming a Christian is much more than going to heaven when we leave the world. It is about God building an eternal relationship with us in this life. We can truly experience a close fellowship with God. Recently, a boy who has stayed at multiple foster homes was interviewed by a TV station. He was asked what his number one wish was. He said honestly: "I want a family." He did not only need a room, some food and clothes. He hoped to have a genuine relationship with someone who loved him and treated him as a family member. Afterward, several thousand couples responded: "Come join us!" The Bible says believers are adopted children of God. God does not need people to fill the seats in heaven. He wants His believers to join Him as a family.

結論 CONCLUSION

Who will have a seat to God's feast? No one except the Heavenly King sets the criteria. The refused are out because they do not want to accept the terms. The rejected are also out because they want to create their own terms. Only the responded are admitted when they put on the righteous robe provided by the Host. Jesus gives us the moral of the parable in **verse 14**: "For many are invited, but few are chosen." Throughout history many people dream to go to heaven. Eventually, only a portion of them will sit at the banquet. The invitation is sent. Only those who react with RSVP will be welcome. RSVP is an acronym for a French phrase that means "please respond." People must respond by admitting their sins, trusting that Jesus died on their behalf, accepting Jesus by faith as their Savior and are willing to follow Him as their Lord.

引言 INTRODUCTION

希望你在上週四與家人共度愉快的感恩節晚餐。我們家吃了烤鴨而不是吃烤火雞。我們今天要看的比喻和吃大餐有關。這是耶穌在世上最後一週所講的比喻。祂快要上十字架了。敵對耶穌的勢力不斷在升級。猶太宗教領袖知道耶穌是舊約中預言的救世主。但是他們不希望耶穌成為他們的主。耶穌因此用這個比喻來定那些宗教領袖的罪。耶穌在路加福音 14 章中講了一個非常相似的比喻。故事的情節有一些明顯的差異。一個主人準備了宴會。一些受邀的嘉賓卻用各種藉口拒絕參加。因此，主人差派僕人兩次的邀請其他人來填補座位。聖經學者辯論兩個比喻是否相同。在我們的討論中，我同意這兩個故事是相輔相成的。這兩個比喻都用筵席來象徵進入神的國。那幅圖畫有舊約的根據。猶太人期待與神在永恆裡歡度盛大的慶典。在任何文化中，與朋友和家人吃飯都表示喜悅和交誼。能夠跟神一起用餐將會是多麼的喜樂！關鍵是：誰能坐在神的筵席中？

解釋 EXPLANATION

我們需要弄清楚的第一件事是這個比喻的直接聽眾是誰。第一節中的「他們」是誰？我們可以假設這一章是上一章的延續。馬太福音 21:45 指出耶穌正在與祭司長和法利賽人談話。他們是當時的猶太宗教領袖。在第 21 章的結尾部分，耶穌講了另一個比喻，責備那些領袖拒絕祂。在那個比喻中，一些葡萄園的租戶拒絕向主人付租金。經過多次失敗的嘗試，主人最後派出自己的兒子到田裡去，以為租戶會尊重他。但是那些邪惡的人認為兒子將來要繼承產業。因此，他們殺了他。這個故事的寓意是在 21:43 - 「所以我告訴你們，神的國必從你們奪去，賜給那能結果子的百姓。」這一節中的「你們」是指宗教領袖。象徵的含義很明顯。園主是天父，兒子是耶穌，租戶是宗教領袖。這些領袖拒絕了耶穌，甚至打算殺死祂。結果，神決定把進入天國的特權給別人。在今天我們要學習的比喻中，也出現了拒絕神的相同主題。因此，我們可以推斷出耶穌要繼續祂對宗教領袖的指控。比喻中有三類人。只有其中的一批被接納參加宴會。換句話說，他們是唯一得救的人。

在故事中，一位國王為兒子準備了一個結婚宴會。慶祝活動即將開始時，國王派一些僕人去通知客人。但是他們卻拒絕來。一些背景知識可以幫助我們了解當時的情況。那時候，宴會通常是在晚上舉行的。也許主人要等到客人都下班後才能開飯。而且主人會提早發出邀請。現在的新娘和新郎會在寄正式邀請卡之前先發出一個「預留日期」的通知。目的是一樣的。人們可以決定是否接受邀請。如果他們打算參加，他們會在日曆上圈出日期。否則，他們會回應說他們不能赴會。主人便能估

計大約會有多少客人。過去，人們的生活比較悠閒。他們知道宴會將在那一天舉行。但是他們不知道確實的時間。因此，食物準備好之後，主人會派僕人去通知賓客。那正是比喻中發生的情形。客人的反應如何？請閱讀第 5-6 節：5「**那些人無理就走了；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。**」他們不理會僕人，有些人甚至把僕人殺掉！那些客人之前答應會參加，但現在他們改變了主意。他們不來赴宴，那將是對國王很大的羞辱。

我將這群人稱為「拒絕的人」。他們代表拒絕神救恩的猶太人。他們知道宴會快到了，但是當關鍵時刻來臨時他們卻拒絕參加。為什麼拒絕？他們忙著自己的事情。在路加的比喻中，那些拒絕參加晚宴的人也提出了類似的藉口。一個人說他必須去檢查他剛購買的田地。另一個人要去看看他買的幾頭牛。第三個人告訴主人，他不能來，因為他剛剛結婚。所有這些都是不成理由的藉口。有時候，當你邀請人來參加教會聚會時，對方會告訴你：「我看看時候有沒有空」或「我會盡量爭取」。這些都是一些禮貌的拒絕方式。在耶穌的時代，大多數人是普通的農民。他們難得有機會吃大餐。這個王準備了一些上好的牛肉。就像今天的安格斯牛排和四川肥牛火鍋。但是客人卻不感興趣。拒絕邀請已經是不給面子了。但是為什麼要殺死僕人那麼過份呢？那個情形描述一些猶太人如何對待神的使者。耶穌在馬太福音 23 章中以七個「禍」來斥責假冒偽善的律法師。其中的一個禍跟殺害神的先知有關。耶穌在 23:37 中感嘆地說 - 「**耶路撒冷啊，耶路撒冷啊，你常殺害先知，又用石頭打死那奉差遣到你這裡來的人。我多次願意聚集你的兒女，好像母雞把小雞聚集在翅膀底下，只是你們不願意。**」宗教領袖是整個以色列拒絕神的縮影。他們不喜歡神的使者，因為他們不喜歡關於罪和悔改的信息。一些殺害神僕人的人立刻得到神的審判。在比喻中，國王派軍隊消滅了兇手，燒毀了他們的城市。神在舊約時代也對故意背叛祂的百姓宣告審判。其中一些人滅亡，另一些人被擄到外邦。神會將祂的恩典從那些拒絕恩典的人身上收回。今天誰是「拒絕的人」？他們可能是一些稍為了解福音的人。他們甚至可能出生在基督徒的家庭中。他們有自己想像版本的「天堂」。他們認為能夠去天堂將會很棒。但是，他們埋頭在今生的事情中。與天堂相比，他們覺得眼前的東西更加真實和吸引人。它們可能是財富、健康、娛樂或其他他們認為重要的事物。神通過他們的基督徒家人或朋友向他們發出邀請。又或者是電影裡的某些場景、名人的得救見證或是周圍發生的事情，使他們想到生命的脆弱和不確定性。神一直在敲他們的心門。但是他們把其他事情看得更重要，沒有空回應神的邀請。耶穌給他們的信息是：不要拒絕神的邀請。如果他們拒絕的話，機會將轉給別人。

故事就是這樣發展的。既然食物都已經準備好，宴會就不能推遲了。國王因此要求一些僕人出去，邀請任何他們可以召聚的人。讀第 10 節：「**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。**」在路加的版本中，僕人出去兩次，因為經過第一輪的努力後仍然有空位。這可能只是兩個比喻中

的次要差別。重點是表明主人的厚意。它也反映出神的心，祂希望有更多人得救。我們可能猜想馬太說「善惡」的客人是什麼意思。路加福音 14:21 給我們一些線索：「...『快出去，到城裡大街小巷，領那貧窮的、殘廢的、瞎眼的、癩腿的來。』」今天，我們稱他們為生活在貧困地區的弱勢群體。他們的經濟狀況比較差。因此這裡形容的「善惡」包括有錢人和窮人、道德上正直的人和活在罪中的人。無論背景如何，任何人都可以來。我稱這些客人為「回應的人」。宗教領袖一定對國王的慷慨大感驚訝。他歡迎任何回應他召喚的人。耶穌來到世上時，他故意靠近窮人、病患者、被鬼附的人、小孩子和婦女。這些人都是宗教領袖看不起的人，因為他們一無所有。如果神要收取天堂入場費，窮人肯定負擔不起高昂的代價。病人因為身體軟弱，也不能靠自己的努力走進去。被鬼附的人也身受困綁。那時，孩子和婦女也被視為不重要的人。但是當耶穌邀請他們時，他們回應了耶穌的恩典。每個罪人都是以同樣的方式得救的。當我們向別人分享福音時，耶穌從不要求我們檢查聽眾的資格。沒有人有足夠的資格。耶穌要我們傳達的信息是：「宴會已經準備好了。任何積極回應的人都可以得到救贖。」

這個比喻在這裡有一個圓滿的結局。宴會上坐滿人。每個客人都準備好大吃一頓。國王也保住自己的面子。但是這個故事有一個轉折。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。」我們也許覺得國王不講理。那個人在最後一刻才進來，更不用說他可能身世窮困。他在這麼短的時間去哪裡借燕尾禮服？在任何文化中，穿著正式表示尊重主人家的邀請。這個人無言以對，因為他沒有理由不遵守習俗。當時，主人會為無法找到適合衣服的客人提供隆重的服裝。因此，那個人無法解釋為什麼他沒有在入口處拿一件禮服。未能達到最低要求將導致悲慘的結局。繼續閱讀第 13 節：「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。』」 「哀哭切齒」這個形容在馬太福音出現了六次，在路加福音出現了一次。毫無例外，它描述被遺棄和受審判的情景。簡而言之，那些人將永遠沉淪。那個人已經坐在宴會廳裡了，但是他在享受美食之前卻被拉出去了。耶穌是否說將來有些人即使進了天堂也會被趕走？就像有人到另一個國家旅行。他已降落在機場。嚴格來說，他已經在別國了。但是海關官員注意到，這個人護照上的名字與簽證不符。因此，他被拒絕入境。這裡的重點是，那個人沒有資格坐在裡頭，因為他沒有穿禮服。神到底對祂要拯救的人有什麼要求？

在路加福音中，耶穌講完這個比喻之後，祂提出成為祂的門徒的代價。一個人必須犧牲一切，包括他的家人，才能成為耶穌的跟隨者。主不是要我們離家出走、變賣財產和辭掉工作。但是，當我們接受耶穌進入我們的心中時，我們必須將生命的主權交給祂。當我們稱呼耶穌為我們的主時，我們讓祂有絕對的權利以祂認為合適的方式帶領我們的生命。我們知道，神了解我們過於我們了解自己。我們相信，即使事情沒有按照我們喜歡的方式發生，神也會有更高的旨意。我將比喻中被趕走的客

人稱為「被棄的人」。他代表那些想按自己的方式去天堂的人。世界上有很多這樣的人。他們想以簡單的方式成為基督徒。他們覺得要參加教會的聚會、每天讀聖經和奉獻金錢這些要求太高了。讓我們清楚一點，就算做到上述所有的事情都無法拯救任何靈魂。但是，如果你說自己是基督徒，有什麼證據嗎？你服從神在聖經中的命令嗎？你可能會爭辯說：「神不太在乎形式。祂知道我的心。」但是你的行為能否證明你的內心呢？假設有一位員工坐在他的辦公室。但是他沒有聽老闆的吩咐去做事。他整天只在炒股票和玩電腦遊戲。他確實戴著員工的證件。你能說他是公司的雇員嗎？我有一個親戚在一家美國汽車製造商工作。他告訴我，如果有任何工人敢開外國製造的汽車上班，那麼很有可能會有人在他的車子上面簽名。如果你說自己效忠於某家公司，那麼你需要拿出證明來！成為一個基督徒不僅僅是離開這個世界時去天堂而已。神要在今生與我們建立永恆的關係。我們可以與神有緊密的交誼。最近，一個電視台採訪了一個住過幾個寄養家庭的男孩。他被問到有什麼最希望達成的願望。他誠懇地說：「我想要一個家庭。」他不僅需要一個房間、一些食物和衣服。他希望與一些愛他並將他接納為家庭成員的人建立真誠的關係。看到廣播之後，有幾千對夫婦回應說：「歡迎你成為我們的家人！」聖經說信徒是神的兒女。神不需要人填滿天堂的空缺。天父希望信徒們成為祂的家人。

結論 CONCLUSION

誰能坐在神的宴席上？標準是由天國的王設定的。有些人拒絕接受神的要求。另外有些人會被棄絕，因為他們想要設立自己的條件。只有積極回應的人才能被接納，因為他們穿上主所賜予的義袍。耶穌在第 14 節告訴我們比喻的寓意：「**因為被召的人多，選上的人少。**」縱觀歷史，許多人都夢想著去天堂。但最終只會有一部分人坐在天堂的筵席上。邀請卡已經發出來了。只有那些選擇回應的人才能坐在席上。人們必須回應神的呼召，承認自己的罪，相信耶穌為他們的罪而死，以信心接受耶穌為救主，並願意跟隨耶穌為他們的主。