

INVITATION AND RESPONSE

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts
Sunday, September 27, 1964

Scripture: Matthew 22:1-14

Introduction:

The total Christian life can be seen as an invitation. The activities and ceremonies that take place in our church can be seen from this perspective.

1. We are invited to dedicate our children to the Lord. We do this for at least two reasons:
 - (a) The Lord Jesus was dedicated in the temple. (Luke 2:22) *“And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’).”*
 - (b) The Lord Jesus himself blessed the children and invited them to come to him. (Mk 10:14) *“Let the little children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.... And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.”*

We recognized that our children belong to God. They are gifts. We also commit them to him.

2. Baptism is a confession that we have accepted God’s invitation. *“My son, give me thine heart.”* We have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.

We Baptists say it is for adults, because it is a matter of choice. God’s election is always a fact. But man’s rejection is always a possibility.

3. Invitation to the Lord’s Supper: *“Come, all things are ready.”*
 - We rejoice – the Lord is present.
 - We give thanks – the Lord has redeemed us.
 - We hope – the Lord is coming.
4. The invitation of preaching: Billy Graham
 - Karl Barth – “Your invitation makes me cringe.”
 - Brunner – “I like best of all your invitation. Never fail to give one.”

Let us consider the parable of the invitation to the marriage feast.

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast.”

I. God's invitation is spontaneous and free.

A. *"For God so loved the world..."*

B. Invitation in O.T.

*"Attention, every one who thirsts, come to the water;
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.*

C. In the N.T. the invitation comes through our Lord:

1. *"Repent and believe in the gospel."*
2. (Luke 4:18) *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*
3. It means that the barriers are broken.
 - a. Jesus proclaimed forgiveness and release; mixed with publicans and sinners.
 - b. No high nor low; no white nor black. These are our distinctions.
4. It means joy. That is the reason for a party.

II. The invitation can be rejected.

A. Those who were invited "would not come". They take the invitation seriously but stubbornly refuse to accept it. Ex. of Jonah.
We may willfully reject God's call.

B. They made light of it and went off. When the second invitation came, they refused to take it seriously.

"Tell those who are invited: 'Behold, I have made ready my dinner... everything is ready; come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it and went off.'"

We put up excuses which are all reasonable and acceptable:

- (1) one went to his farm;
- (2) another to his business
- (3) other excuses: "I'm tired", "I'm so busy", "I don't have time."
But remember doña Justa with 14 children. She and her husband were the most faithful members of our church.

D. Some even go beyond excuses and willfully obstruct God's plans:

"While the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them."

Paul – but he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Most of us would not put up excuses and do not go to the extreme action of Paul.

III. God's invitation can be taken away.

- A. *"The king was angry and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."*
- B. Invitation given to others:
"Go to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests."

IV. God anew invites us.

- A. Invitation to give what we have:
 --our family – Ex. of Sammy
 --our money
- B. Invitation to dedicate our lives again:
 --Billy Graham & his crusade – many go up because they want to make a real
 --V́ctor Mercado commitment
- C. Invitation to enter for the first time the narrow gate of God's way.
 You can enter only on God's terms:
 - (1) He gives the invitation.
 - (2) He gives a new heart.
 - (3) He demands radical obedience.
 - (4) This is the meaning of the guest without a garment.

Conclusion: This is no ordinary invitation.

- A. The parable of the pearl of great price.
- B. The parable of the treasure hidden in the field.

(Apoc.3:20) – *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

The invitation is open but the door may be locked. Ex. of Hunt = The Light of the World
"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

The Kingdom of God – To choose it is the most significant choice of your life.