

“Many are invited, but few are chosen.” The authorities were furious. What gave Jesus the right to shut down the temple and sacrificial system?! What gave him the right to claim that the Creator would take the Kingdom away from them and give it to others?! But Jesus wasn’t done. In fact, he had just gotten started.

Jesus next told them that the Kingdom of Heaven was like a king throwing a marriage feast for his son. When everything was prepared, the king sent out his servants to tell those he had invited to the marriage feast that the time had arrived. But those that were invited didn’t care. They were too busy with **family** and **business** affairs. So they ignored the servants. Others were actually annoyed at the servants and killed them. The king was angry. So he sent his army to destroy them and burn their city to the ground. Then he told his servants to go out and bring **everyone** they could into the marriage feast. So the servants went out and gathered everyone, **good** and **bad**, and brought any who were willing into the feast. The banquet hall was filled. But then the king saw that many were not dressed in the marriage clothes that he himself had provided for everyone there. So he threw them out of the feast. Then Jesus said, **“Many are invited, but few are chosen.”** The Creator was inviting everyone into the Kingdom of Heaven, regardless of whether they were good or bad. One’s past did not matter, the Kingdom was the chance at a fresh start because the Creator loved all people and all of his creation. But to be part of the Kingdom, **everyone** needed to be willing to **walk away** from their lives and also **change** clothes—they needed to take off their old ways and life and put on the new clothing that the Lord provided for them—they needed to clothe themselves in Christ and his Way and teachings. **“Many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

Upset by Jesus’s words pointing to their rejection of the Kingdom of Heaven, the authorities went on the offensive. They teamed up across their political divides to try and trap Jesus. They openly put him on the spot in the temple, asking him to answer about taxes to the Roman Emperor. If Jesus said that taxes **should** be given to the Roman Emperor, then the crowds that were supporting Jesus would turn on him. But if Jesus said taxes **should not** be paid to the Roman Emperor, then the Roman authorities would be able to arrest Jesus for treason and sedition. Jesus slid through their trap saying, **“Give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, give to the Creator what belongs to the Creator.”**

But what belonged to the Creator? This was the lingering question. And Jesus went on to answer it for those with ears to hear. Jesus told them, **“Love the Lord your Creator with all your mind, heart, and soul. And love your neighbor as yourself. All of the Law and Prophets depend on these.”** Every part of every person belongs to the Creator—all of our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies. Our neighbors belong to the Creator. It is **all** rightfully his. Jesus didn’t care about stupid money and cities, made by human hands. He cared about what the Creator had made. All of our minds, hearts, souls, and bodies needed to be given to the Creator everyday, every moment. **“Many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

The authorities were silenced by Jesus’s answers to their challenges. Then Jesus went on the offensive. And he let them have it. He gathered us and the crowds around him and began to warn us about the authorities. Over and over Jesus called them, **“Hypocrites”** and **“blind fools!”** Jesus said, **“They do not practice what they teach.”** These leaders lived for show and for the approval of others. They wanted others to think they were pious and righteous. They pretended to belong in the Kingdom, but they didn’t have the clothes of Christ. Jesus said to them, **“You neglect what is most important in the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness!”** They were too busy with their current lives to want to change and repent and join the feast of the Kingdom. Jesus said, **“You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence. You are blind! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may become clean too!”** To put on the clothes of Christ, the wedding garments, was to be transformed completely, from the inside out. Again Jesus said, **“You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of death.”** The authorities were not giving to the Creator what belonged to him—they were holding back their minds, hearts, souls, and bodies. The Creator had made them and he was calling and inviting them to live in his Kingdom, but they were refusing. They were so in love with their selfish lives. Jesus said, **“How often I have longed to gather you together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it!”**

“Many are invited, but few are chosen.” Jesus had previously taught us that the way that leads to death is **wide** and **easy** and **most** everyone walks that road. And the way that leads to life is **narrow** and **difficult** and very **few** find it. The Creator’s love is wide and his patience is long—he invites everyone, good and bad, to join his Kingdom—the Lord does not play favorites. But to join the Kingdom we have to walk away from our old lives and we need to take off our old clothes and ways and put on the new Way of Christ. Jesus said to us, **“Whoever lifts himself up will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be lifted up.”** To accept the Lord’s invitation into his Kingdom we must humble ourselves and give him all of our mind, heart, soul, and body—this is to accept the new clothing and life that he gives us. All are invited to humble themselves and surrender everything to the Lord, but few are willing to do it. **“Many are invited, but few are chosen.”**

We have **all** been invited to the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are not invited because we are **good** or **bad**, we are invited because the Lord **loves** us and wants what is good for us. The Lord is seeking all of us, he is wanting to pull all of us out of our self-destructive ways and gather us under the safety of his wings. But if we are going to accept the Lord’s invitation, then we must walk away from our focus and preoccupation with our own families and lives and we must take off our old clothes and put on the new clothing that the Lord provides for us.

Christ is our marriage clothing who gives us a rightful place in the Kingdom of Heaven. We must take **off** the world’s ways of arrogance, fear, and violence—we must take **off** our egos. The inside of our lives, the hidden parts, the thoughts and feelings, must all be cleaned out by Christ. It doesn’t matter how together we may look on the outside, if inside we are full of selfishness and filth. But if we are clothed in Christ, then he will **cleanse us** from the **inside out**. We must put on Christ’s Word and teachings—we must put on faith, hope, and love—we must put on the two great commandments—we must put on the way of humility and servanthood by lowering ourselves to lift others up. But if we refuse to be changed from the inside out, then we will be pulled out of the Kingdom and thrown back into the outer darkness of the world around us.

Are you **hearing** the Lord’s personal invitation into the Kingdom of Heaven? Or are you too busy with your life to even realize that the Kingdom has been offered to you? The Lord is inviting you, calling you out of your busy and distracted life and into his Kingdom. He is offering you new clothing—a new life, a new way of being in Christ Jesus with new priorities and a new focus. Will you accept his invitation into this new life or will you continue to stumble around in the sad and painful outer darkness of this world? **“Many are invited, but few are chosen.” Amen.**