

**Worship Material**  
**A wholehearted response to God's invitation**  
**Materials from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 15th October**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Generous God, we kneel in awe at your willingness to draw us into your fellowship; in wonder at your gracious invitation to join the feast of life; in gratitude at your care for each one of us; in humility for your faithfulness towards each one of us. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we kneel and worship and adore you. **Amen.**

**Read Matthew 22:1-14**

**Bible notes**

In this parable, as in the preceding two, Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders. This wedding banquet story follows immediately on the tail of his direct comment that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to those who produce kingdom fruits (21:43). Jesus' earlier comment is illustrated as those who have been invited to the wedding banquet refuse to come, and the king throws open the invitation to all. The people of God were set apart by God, a chosen people, not in the sense of being elite, but rather chosen to show God to the other nations. Having failed to take this seriously, they have lost their status.

There are some stark images in this story. The invited guests do not merely fail to show up: they refuse, they insult, they kill the messengers. The king does not merely feel anger: there is a severe consequence. Those who are invited instead do not fall into certain categories; everyone is invited, good and bad. As an image of the kingdom of heaven, God is generous and our response matters.

The custom was for the host – in this case the king – to provide wedding robes for the guests. All guests were dressed similarly, so role and status were irrelevant. The guest in the parable who has continued to wear his own clothes wasn't wholehearted in his acceptance. He has not joined in with the necessary preparation for the banquet. He has stood apart, attending on his own terms and this, too, has a severe consequence. The symbolism here is that of clothing representing one's spiritual state (see, for example, Romans 13:12, Galatians 3:27). All are welcome in the kingdom of heaven, but a wholehearted acceptance of God's invitation is needed.

## Prayer

We give you thanks, wonderful God, for the gift of life, for the opportunities of life, for the invitations to flourish in life. May we be as whole-hearted as you in all we do, as generous as you in all we give, as daring as you in all we dream, and as faithful as you in all our relationships. Thank you for everything. **Amen.**

### A prayer to conclude

Go into the week ahead, and wherever you find yourself, celebrating or sharing a sadness, or anything in between, may you rejoice in God's grace.

See each moment as an invitation to meet with God, each meeting as an opportunity to invite others.

Until we meet again. **Amen.**