

Scorning the call of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Well, do turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 21. And the title today is rather solemn, scorning the call of Jesus. In the first part of Matthew 21 that we looked at last week, we saw that Jesus has reached the end of his travelling ministry throughout all Judea and Galilee and throughout all Israel.

And now he enters Jerusalem publicly, to shouts of, Hosanna, Lord save us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And he enters his temple authoritatively, claiming it as his own house, to cleanse it and to purge it.

And all this announces with no doubt left at all his true identity. It's being shouted from the housetops by his followers, even by the children.

This is the Messiah. This is the son of David. This is the great bringer of salvation that we have all waited for.

This is the day of the Lord that the prophets all promised. It's here at last. This is the promised king, the one that Zechariah said would rule from sea to sea, from shore to shore.

[1 : 1 9] The one who would rule over all earth, over all peoples. It's absolutely clear. And here he comes at first to Jerusalem, to Israel, to God's chosen covenant people.

Behold, behold, your king is the message. Rejoice in him. Join the rejoicing of the repentance and the restoration that he offers to all of you now.

It really is an amazing sight. It's the fulfillment of all the ages come upon this generation. But we saw the very, very astonishing thing, that in the main, the reaction wasn't repentance for sin and rejoicing in forgiveness and God's salvation.

Yes, some of the people did. Some of the little ones, the lowly ones, the children, the despised ones, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the blind and the lame, some of them did rejoice and enter the kingdom.

But the leaders, the establishment, the majority did not welcome him. Why? Well, we saw it's because they cannot tolerate his unique claim to authority.

[2 : 4 3] To recognize Jesus' identity means to bow to his unique authority. He and he alone is Lord. And of course, that's what so many simply will not do.

Even, maybe even especially, religious people. And that was true then and that's true today. They love the temple.

They love the kirk, perhaps. They love its flowers. They love the choirs. They love the pews. They love the hymn tunes. All sorts of things. But, they do not love to surrender to Jesus as a unique and total Lord of every aspect of your life.

Never that. That is the scandal of a unique authority. And it's as intolerable today as it was then.

And any amount of religion, any amount of ceremony, even any amount of duty people will have, but not that. Nothing so radical, nothing so fundamentalist as that total surrender to Jesus.

[4 : 01] It's got to be civilized. It's got to be rationalized. It's got to be relativized. In other words, it's got to be neutralized, effectively. But, you see, Jesus will not be relativized.

No one stands up against God's authority in the person of his one and only son and relegates him to the position of passive spectator.

No one. Not even God's chosen people. Not even his special, holy covenant nation. Not even Israel. No. Because unbelief has no place in the kingdom of God.

Unbelief is the opposite of true faith. Unbelief is rebellion and rejection of God personally. And it's exposed, as we saw last week, by a lack of anything real and living and visible to show for the so-called public profession of religious faith.

It's exposed by a lack of real fruit. And Israel is exposed by Jesus when he confronts them, just like a fruitless fig tree.

[5 : 18] Israel has been chosen and tended and watered and cared for. But in the end, all there is to show is leaves. No fruit. Nothing but spurious religiosity in their temple.

No real heart obedience at all. They've been confronted with all the evidence in the world in Jesus Christ. They've been offered every opportunity possible to repent and to join God's kingdom.

But in the end, they show just the same attitude as there has always been sheer unbelief. When John the Baptist comes, they reject his message and his warnings.

And Jesus says in verse 32, even when you saw everything that John prophesied being fulfilled in me, even then, when it was before your eyes, you would not turn.

You would not change your mind. You would not change your heart. You would not repent and believe. Your hearts were like sheer flint. And so now from here until the end of chapter 23, there is a rising focus in Matthew's gospel on the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of Israel, representing as they do Israel as a totality, as an entity before God.

[6 : 40] And it is a very sobering and fearful progression. First of all, we have these three parables that we read that speak of rejecting Jesus as God's last and greatest messenger of the covenant.

Then we have in the next section three confrontations that Jesus has with the leaders of the people in their questions showing that they are rejecting Jesus as God's last and greatest teacher of his covenant way.

Then we come to chapter 23 which is very, very grim. Terrible pronouncements of God's curses upon his people as Jesus himself pronounces woes after woes upon Israel as a nation.

It's the climax of God's covenant curse being pronounced against his chosen people. A fearful chapter. And so you see these chapters that we're looking at now explain to us first of all the events that lead eventually to the crucifixion of Jesus at the hands of those who reject him.

And they also explain the fact of Jesus' new covenant community that he's calling out to himself, his church. Those who will be called to fulfill the ultimate destiny of God's true Israel.

[8 : 07] But only through a terrible purging and judgment that casts off Israel as a national entity, as a chosen nation, that casts them off in a final judgment for rebellion and unbelief.

And so the primary focus in these chapters is upon God's rejection of Israel for their rejection of his son. But we're going to see that there is a very solemn lesson in these chapters nonetheless for everybody, for us.

Because it's all about the consequences of meeting Jesus Christ, God's unique king, with scorn and with rejection and with derision.

And that's true whoever you are and wherever you are. We need to notice that both of these parables were addressed not to outsiders, not to those who are hearing the message for the first time, but to insiders, to those who are members of the visible people of God, but who nevertheless were blind to the reality that in truth their hearts were far from God.

And that that was exposed when they met the final and the greatest messenger of God's covenant in the face of Jesus Christ himself. So these things are written for the church, even though it's about Jesus' encounter with Israel.

[9 : 34] And we'd better listen. It's a warning from the Lord of the church for his church, for those who profess to be people of God. It's for us.

That's who Matthew is writing his gospel for. So let's look then first at this parable of the tenants in the vineyard and see that Jesus exposes among those claiming to be the people of God, he exposes them not to be that at all by showing that on the surface, although they seem to be his, their true attitude is one of disdain for the fruit of the kingdom.

them. Unbelief, you see, despises and ignores the master's call to fruitfulness. This parable follows immediately on from the one that we read about the two sons, and it speaks to the same people, the chief priests and the elders.

Jesus says, here's another parable. Really, it's a bit like being in the ring with Muhammad Ali. They're getting punched again and again and again by very piercing teaching from Jesus.

You almost feel sorry for them, but they need it and they've asked for it. And the parable takes on and expounds further that one of the two sons, but there's a progression here.

[10 : 55] The parable of the sons, you see, exposed an attitude of religious style, yes, I'll go, but no substance. He doesn't go. The son says, yes, I'll be a good son, but in the end he does absolutely nothing at all.

But here we have more than that. Here we have the inevitable conclusion of such an attitude. Here we have a message about the day of reckoning. And the truth is, you see, that it's not a flash in the pan sort of episode of peak that Israel has had against Jesus.

The truth is it's an attitude of hardened and settled rebellion that in the end can only possibly lead to judgment. man. The parable portrays the call of God's kingdom in terms of being a calling with great responsibilities.

God's call, God's gospel is a command to be obeyed. Yes, it is a gracious call, of course it is. Yes, it's a privilege to serve such a great master, but it carries obligations.

It's a call with a purpose and that purpose is to produce and display fruit. From the beginning, that's what God's call to Israel was all about, to be his chosen people.

[12 : 10] Just listen to some words from Deuteronomy 26 of what God says just as they're on the brink of the promised land. Deuteronomy 26, verse 18. The Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, and he has promised you so that you keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and honor and fame high above all nations that he's made, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised.

You see, the call of God is to be a holy people, to be a people keeping God's commands, and therefore shining as a light to the Gentile nations.

That was Israel's calling. Do you remember Isaiah again and again calling Israel to be a light to the nations? Isaiah 43, you are my witnesses, my servant whom I've chosen, that they might declare my praise.

That was God's call to his chosen people, Israel, that primarily and above all, their chief end would be to glorify the one true God, and to glorify him in the eyes of the world, to bear fruit for him in abundance in this world.

world. And for that purpose, God had tended Israel and cared for Israel like a precious vineyard, so that she might bear fruit. But again, and again, and again, as was expressed in that psalm that we sang, Israel failed continually to live up to the calling.

[13 : 46] Just listen to the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 5, speaking about Israel. My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones.

He planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it. He hewed out a wine vat for it. He looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

And now inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I haven't done for it? And when I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

Now I'll tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I'll remove its hedge. It will be devoured. I'll break down its wall and it will be trampled. I'll make it a waste.

It shall not be pruned or hoed. Briars and thorns shall grow up. I'll also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

[14 : 48] Israel and the men of Judah. And he looked for justice, but behold bloodshed for righteousness, but behold an outcry.

See, God's loyalty and patience with Israel had been almost immeasurable. But at last he can stand it no more. And he says he will judge. Of course, Israel was sent into exile for 70 years.

Jesus. And now, Jesus himself, the last and the greatest messenger of the covenant, God's son himself in the flesh, stands before the leaders of Israel and talks about final judgment, final judgment on the servants of God's vineyard.

And there's no doubt who he's talking about, is there? Look at verse 45. When the chief priests and the scribes heard him, they realized he was talking about them.

Well, that was hardly rocket science, was it? Have to be a complete blockhead not to miss what Jesus is talking about. If there couldn't be any doubt, he was talking about them and their history as a nation.

[16 : 03] And their final apostate rejection of the son of God himself. Just like this master who sent his servants out to offer warnings and possibilities of changing their ways.

God had sent Israel judges and prophets and teachers and men of God. Many, many, many messengers of the covenant. To rebuke his people, to warn his people, to tell them to come back.

But just as in the parable again and again, they'd been met always with rejection and violence. The end of Matthew 23, Jesus sums up Jerusalem's history like this.

The city that killed the prophets and stoned those who are sent to it. That's Jerusalem. And that's verse 35 here, isn't it?

They took the servants and they beat some and they killed another and they stoned another. And yet, despite that, despite that, do you see the incredible patience and long-sufferingness of this master?

[17 : 14] Would you have been slow to bring retribution? Would you have sent yet more servants to your vineyard? Are any of us slow today to assert our rights?

Yes, you'd have them up before the courts straight away. But no, he sends again and again, more than the first. And at last, he sends his own son and says, surely, surely, even these wicked servants will respect my son.

Even if it's only out of fear. But no, that only seems to draw out the worst bile, the worst hatred of it all. Let's kill him, they say.

It's quite extraordinary, isn't it? Some of the scholars suggest that maybe they think that if the son is coming, well, the master must be dead and therefore if they kill him, they'll get the inheritance.

Or they suggest perhaps if they kill the son, the master will at last stop bothering them. I don't think it can be that. There's no hint of that in a story. Surely it's this. It's a totally irrational hatred and scorn for the master himself.

[18 : 28] It's displayed most brutally, most obviously, when they're faced with the one who's closest to him. Killing the son, they're not just trying to get something for themselves.

They're actually venting their rage, their hatred of the master himself. But in doing so, they expose not only their hatred of the master, but their total ignorance of him.

Their absolute miscalculation of his wrath and his anger and his will to do justice and his power to do justice. Like so many people, they think that because God is merciful and long-suffering and slow to anger, they think, therefore, that he's soft, that he's feeble.

They think, therefore, that his anger will never, ever be kindled against sin and against the wicked hatred in people's hearts. But they discover that that is a mistake of colossal proportion.

And in verse 40, you see Jesus forces his enemies to condemn themselves, do you see? Their theology is very orthodox, isn't it?

[19 : 45] Even if their hearts are hard. What do you think will happen, says Jesus? The answer is, those wretches will meet a wretched end. Judgment will come and huge loss, huge loss.

They will forfeit all their privileges to others who will give the Master the fruit that he desires. And yes, says Jesus in verse 24, that's exactly what's going to happen to you.

The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and it will be given to a people who will produce fruit. Jesus is saying, it's all about fruit. It always has been.

It's always been about God's call to fruitfulness, to bring glory to the Master's name. A son who doesn't do his Father's will is no true son, just as a fig tree that produces new fruit is no true tree.

It must be destroyed. And what Jesus is saying to this generation is, it's too late for you. It's too late for you, just as it was too late for the barren fig tree. Because you have rejected the last and the greatest messenger of the covenant.

[20 : 56] You have rejected the Son of God himself when he comes. Behold, he is coming, said the Lord through the prophet Malachi. But who shall stand when he appears? Because he draws near to you in judgment.

You've been warned again and again and again, says Jesus. But now it's too late. And you should know, you've got the scriptures. Haven't you ever read, says Jesus, Psalm 118?

That's the psalm they were all singing when I came into Jerusalem. They were singing Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Don't you know that that one is also the great stone rejected by men but exalted by God?

Don't you know that he is the one who will be the chief cornerstone through God's marvelous doing? Don't you know that? Yes. What Jesus is saying is, God is going to marvelously vindicate me.

This stone that you are rejecting will rise to be your judge. Don't you see? When you come to confront the last and the greatest messenger of the covenant of God, the Son of God himself, the mighty foundation stone of God's kingdom, there are only two possibilities.

[22 : 10] That's what Jesus is saying in verse 44. Either you will fall on this stone, you'll be broken and you'll be humbled like these little ones have been, the prostitutes and the tax collectors, and you'll enter his kingdom.

Or, it will fall upon you and you will be destroyed. Remember Daniel chapter 2, we were just looking at last Sunday evening? The stone not hewn with human hands that will destroy every kingdom of the world.

And Jesus is saying, even the chosen nation of Israel, if you reject the Son himself when he comes, if you will not rejoice in Christ and the rock of God's salvation, you too will be destroyed.

Don't you find verses 45 and 46 very chilling? You see, these people knew what Jesus was saying. He'd been rehearsing their own thoughts.

That's what they'd been thinking. They wanted him dead. They wanted him arrested. He'd exposed their consciences. They knew that they were guilty of exactly what he was saying. But did it produce repentance in them?

[23 : 23] No, it didn't. They wanted to arrest him. They wanted to get rid of him. It was only fear of the people that stopped them. But Jesus hasn't finished.

Again, he spoke to them in parables, chapter 22, verse 1. And the theme's the same, but again, there's a progression and there's an even clearer depiction of the final consequences of refusing the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace.

And this parable brings out even more clearly the sheer perversity of the rejection of Jesus by Israel and indeed by anyone who brings disdain and pours scorn on God's call for fruit.

Here Jesus exposes that the heart of unbelief is something else altogether. It's not just a disdain for God's fruit.

It's a disdain also for the feast of the kingdom. Unbelief disdains and scorns and ignores the king's call to feasting, just as it scorns the king's call to fruitfulness.

[24 : 37] You see, this parable portrays the call of God not just as a call of obedience to be obeyed, which it is, but as a call to wonder and to joy and to feasting at the very table of the king.

It's not just a call to fruitfulness, it's an invitation to a wedding feast. It's an offer of sheer blessing from the Lord of glory himself. It's an offer to share his family table, to share his family's joy.

The chief end of man is not just to glorify God by bearing fruit for his kingdom. It's to enjoy God and to enjoy him forever.

I do wish those ignorant cynics that you read in the newspapers talking about Scotland's doer Calvinist heritage, I do wish they'd actually bother to read even the first question and answer of the shorter catechism.

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. That's what Jesus is saying here. God's call to man is a call to joy, to rejoicing, to feasting, to joining in the nuptial joy of God's only begotten Son.

[25 : 46] It's an invitation to a great feast. And all through the Old Testament story God speaks in those terms about his people Israel with nuptial imagery, wedding imagery.

Just read Ezekiel 16 for example. God found Israel as an abandoned and naked child. He nurtured her, he covered her, he cherished her, he takes her as his beloved bride, he heaps love upon her.

Yet again and again and again despite God's lavish loving he's rebuffed and rejected.

But that kind of reaction against God is utterly perverse. His call is a command to be obeyed but what a glorious command, what a wonderful command.

It's good news, it's great joy. I quote from my father's notes here. Salvation is first of all something God gives to us and all the challenge and summons must be seen against the great joy that he seeks to bestow upon men.

[26 : 57] It's this fact that so transforms the challenge that in spite of its radical nature and devastating demands it is still the most wonderful thing in the world to become a Christian.

Yet so often we seem to be totally blind to the real wonder of who God really is and the joy of what he's offering us. God is not a harsh and abusive taskmaster standing over us with a whip.

In his service is perfect freedom. Come to me says Jesus. My yoke is easy, my burden is light. Come to the feast is the call of the gospel.

It's we who are so perverse. We have perverted the image of God and Israel would not join in the joy of her master.

She would not join the joy of God. The religious establishment had turned the joy of God and serving him as a joy had turned it into a burden. They turned the joy of relationship with God into the drudgery of mere religion.

[28 : 14] But the scripture says this is the God who turns mourning into the oil of joy. You've got him totally back to front. It's perverse. And he wooed Israel with grace and mercy again and again and again invitation after invitation and yet still she refused to really know him.

And that's what this parable is talking about isn't it? Look at verse 3. Those days an invitation would have gone out long before the feast to invite the privileged ones to warn them.

As the day drew near the servants would go out and say the feast's near come get yourselves ready to come. That's what's happening in verse 3. It's a message to those who are already in possession of the knowledge and the invitation of the king.

The reaction's extraordinary. They would not come. So he sends more with urgency. Look it's all prepared. It's waiting. It's all ready for you.

Come. Come to the feast. He's reminding them what a great feast it is. What a joy and a privilege it is to be on the invitation list.

[29 : 28] But again it's met with indifference and scorn and sheer antagonism in others. Outrageous disdain. Sheer malice and wickedness. It's utterly perverse, isn't it?

You might refuse a gracious invitation but do you murder the messenger? And what else can possibly follow but swift justice?

You don't treat a king like that. In verse 7 the judgment is severe, isn't it? The whole city is destroyed. Those who met the invitation with indifference are destroyed alongside those who met it with indignance and with violence.

And they know that he's still talking about them, this cherished city, Jerusalem. Jesus has gone all throughout Galilee just like these messengers.

He's gone all throughout Israel. In chapter 10 we saw he sent his disciples to every town and city of Israel. But everywhere, everywhere, in the main, the message was met with indifference and indignance.

[30 : 39] And hostility. And so, says Jesus, judgment on this city is inevitable and on its temple. At the end of chapter 23 Jesus says all of this will happen to this generation.

This temple, every stone will be left thrown down. And it was 40 years later within one generation. The Romans sacked the whole city, they tore down and they burned the temple.

It was never rebuilt. It was set aside forever because Jesus was proclaiming the true temple, the new and the living way.

And now Jesus is gathering around himself a true Israel, the people who will be the guests in the king's house, those who will answer his invitation.

And they're going to come, it says, from the most unexpected places. Do you see verses 8 to 10? There is no stopping this king's feast. This king will have a house that's full of joy.

[31 : 46] He will have a house filled with guests. His person will be surrounded by joy. So he'll go out to all the world to gather them from the highways and the byways, good and bad.

They'll be brought in and they'll be clothed with his garments. And there'll be a people that will produce fruit for him. Verse 10 says, so the house was filled with guests.

So when verse 14 says, many are called but few are chosen, it doesn't mean that only a few are saved, of course not. It just means that there are some who do refuse. But the master's house will be full.

There will be a great multitude from every nation. That's what the Bible promises. Jesus Christ will not be thwarted in the purposes of his glory and his joy.

That cannot be. But notice that God's call and his purpose for those he does call to the feast remains the same. The gospel call does remain a call to glorify God and to bear fruit for him.

[32 : 52] There can be no enjoyment of the feast of God without glorifying God in the fruit of holiness. And that's just as true of the New Testament people of God, the church as it was of Old Testament Israel.

And that's the point, isn't it, of verses 11 to 13. Speaks about the final judgment. This man is found not wearing a wedding garment. Very probably these garments were provided by the king himself to the guests, but whether it was or wasn't, whether they were meant to bring it themselves or not, the point is surely clear, isn't it?

It was available, but he hadn't bothered to use it. And when he's confronted by God in verse 12, he's speechless, he has no defense. He knows he could have, but he didn't.

And you see, the issue is still exactly the same, isn't it? Is there real faith or is there just unbelief? The true Israelite was always the one who was circumcised in heart, not just in the flesh.

And so it is for the true New Testament believer. real faith, whether it's in the Old Testament or it's in the New Testament church, is just the same, Jesus is saying. It is visible.

[34 : 02] You can see it. There is fruit. There is a wedding garment. And that's the only real evidence of real and living faith, of real relationship with the Master.

And on that day, Jesus is saying, there may be some very nasty shocks and surprises. Remember back in chapter 7, verse 21, not all who say on that day, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom.

Who will? Those who do the will of my Father in heaven, says Jesus. That is, those who will bear fruit. Those who will be wearing a wedding garment.

For Jesus says in verse 14, many are called, but few are chosen. Don't get confused. He's not talking about election, like Paul in one of his epistles. It would make sense if he was. The context is clear.

He's talking about God's judgment on real faith, on the hearts that claim to be his. And the criteria he's saying is the same in the Old Testament and the New Testament, for Israel and for the church.

[35 : 10] Always in the Bible, judgment is by works. Is there fruit? Is there a wedding garment? And it's a warning, isn't it, to us in the New Testament church?

And that's who Matthew is writing for. He's saying to us, don't you presume on the grace of God. You can't be one of his true people if you reject his word and command, if you refuse to let it bear fruit in your life.

You can't be one of his real people if that's you. And we have the final word from God in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus. We have his words and commands. It's those who obey them that love him, Jesus says.

So although this passage is primarily about explaining God's rejection of Israel and his giving away her birthright to another people, a true Israel, a people who will bear fruit from him, there are very clear warnings for the church of God in the New Testament in our time.

Jesus is saying to every one of us, don't you be found speechless before God on that day because you've failed to bear fruit, because you're wearing no wedding garment.

[36 : 25] It's a very solemn warning. Let me close by focusing our mind just on three things. There's a very clear word here to the visible church of Jesus Christ today, whether individual congregations or institutions or even nations.

Our very purpose is to bear fruit, to glorify the master. And if there is no fruit, God may be gracious and patient and slow to anger, but there will come a time when fruitless trees are uprooted, when vineyards are taken away and given to others who will bear fruit.

There comes a day when the king comes and says, where is your wedding garment? And if that can happen to Israel, to God's chosen covenant nation, it can happen and it does happen and it will happen to fruitless churches of Jesus Christ today.

The Lord says to his church, constantly change, bear fruit or else I will come and remove my lampstand. And history proves that.

We know it. Those seven churches in Asia Minor that we read of in Revelation 2 and 3 are all gone. Today they are huge areas of barrenness.

[37 : 46] Many of them are lands utterly overrun by Islam. Do we think that could not happen in this country? We remember what Patrick Sukdeo was saying to us just the other week, don't we?

We need to heed the warning. This week I looked on a website that was talking about Scotland and it made this pronouncement with great confidence. The Lord has not finished with this nation.

Well, I'm not so confident about that. If he could finish with Israel, then he will finish with the Christian church in this nation if there is no fruit.

The sphere of operation of his salvation will move elsewhere to a people who will produce fruit. Is that not what we are seeing today as the church in the West is in decline?

And all the impetus of the movement of God's Spirit seems to be in the developing world, in the South and the East? I hear constantly pronouncements from fellow evangelicals in the Church of Scotland who say that God has not finished with the Church of Scotland.

[38 : 55] God will build his church. But Jesus says, not where there is no fruit, not where his word and command are persistently rejected.

He will not build that kind of church. He will go elsewhere. And that can be true in any congregation of God's people too. We mustn't fail to take Jesus' words seriously.

Second, it is a warning to individual men and women in the Christian church today, is it not? Don't presume upon the grace of God, even if you are a paid up member or leader in the Church of God today.

That was Israel's sin. That was their leader's sin. Be careful with mantras like, once saved, always saved. That too was the Pharisees' mantra.

Once a child of Abraham, always a child of Abraham. Jesus says, where is the fruit? Where is your wedding garment? The Gospel calls us to a radical obedience.

[40 : 01] It calls us to greater righteousness than the Pharisees and the scribes. It's true that we come to Jesus as we are. But it's equally true that without holiness, none shall see God.

And Jesus says, put on the new clothes. Live the new life. Wear the garments that are suitable for the king's feast. The way of the king and the way of real faith means rejoicing to wear the king's robes, not rejecting his generosity and his grace.

The way of the kingdom means rejoicing to bear fruit in the master's vineyard, not resenting his yoke and his service. If our attitude is the latter, Jesus says to us, beware, you've got them all wrong.

You haven't really got to know him personally. Join the joy of his house of feasting. And finally, this passage is a warning to all, whoever they may be, against willful unbelief in Jesus Christ.

Christ. The most chilling thing about these men of Israel's reaction to Jesus was that it was not done in ignorance. They killed the son of the master because they knew who he was.

[41 : 21] Because they knew his identity, but they refused his authority. The truth, my friends, is plain about the gospel of Jesus Christ and about his identity.

But men and women in wickedness suppress the truth. And people do it today. They do it again and again and again.

And despite the extraordinary patience, the extraordinary grace of God holding out his invitation of grace, that day of grace is not never ending.

There comes a day of reckoning. And when that day comes, if we are still found standing in defiance against this one, the Son of God, the rock of salvation, make no mistake, he will fall upon you and he will crush you utterly.

And so Jesus himself, the last and the greatest messenger of God's covenant, the Son himself come to speak to us.

[42 : 36] He says to us, do not disdain the fruit of my kingdom. Bow to my authority. He says, do not disdain the feast of my kingdom.

Come, enter my joy. Don't wait till it's too late. Listen and respond is what he's saying to us.

For many are called, but few are chosen. It is possible to stand in scorn against the call of Jesus Christ. But it's not possible to do that and survive.

So heed his warning. Let's pray. Gracious God and Father, we praise and we thank you for your mercy and for your wonderful long suffering patience and kindness towards us.

We pray that we would be today in this place a people who do not stand against you, but who hear your voice calling us to a life that glorifies you, but enjoys your feasting and your presence forever.

[43 : 53] Help us, we pray, to hear that voice and to respond with gladness, with willing abandon to bow before you the one and only Lord of eternity, our Savior and our God.

Amen. Amen.