

This week a Hindu couple from North London found an enterprising way around the Covid restrictions on the number of wedding guests. They held a drive-in wedding which allowed over 200 guests to watch the 4-hour ceremony on big screens from the safety of their cars. The newlyweds then waved at friends and family during a golf buggy tour of the grounds. Each car was given a hamper of snacks and hand gel. When it came to the wedding feast, people placed their food order via an app on their phones and it was delivered to their car by a waiter.

The wedding for the king's son in the parable was intended to be equally large and lavish. The king sent out his slaves with the invitations. The food had been prepared and everything was ready, but some of the invited guests were too busy. 'They made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.' Others were openly hostile to the king and turned on his slaves, beating them up and even killing some of them.

Jesus' audience would have recognized the point of a story about a king throwing a wedding party for his son straight away. The wedding banquet was one of the images the prophets used when they spoke of the Messiah coming to rescue his people. But the prophets' message had not been heeded by the religious establishment. Now that Jesus was there in Jerusalem challenging the religious leaders of his own day, there was a growing realization that this would be his fate too.

Following the refusal of the invited guests to come and the ill treatment and murder of some of the slaves, the king angrily set aside the guest list, sending his slaves into the streets, to gather everyone they could find, 'both good and bad.' So in the end, because the invited guests had refused the invitation to repent and join the Messianic feast, the wedding hall was filled with a very different set of people. The religious leaders and others who followed them had had many opportunities to hear the

message of Jesus and to join him, but it was tax-collectors and sinners, amongst others, who would sit with Jesus at his table.

The knowledge that God's message is for everyone is good news for all of us. God's kingdom is a kingdom in which love and justice and truth and mercy and holiness reign unhindered. These are the clothes you need to wear for the wedding. We can picture the feast in the words of today's reading from Isaiah:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear...
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. **Amen.**