

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Kingdom of God is About Obedience

by Dan Trygg

“Which of the two *did* his father's will?”

Matthew 21:31

“Therefore the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit.”

Matthew 21:43

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 22:14

These are three very different parables, but they all center around one main truth: ***Doing the will of the Father.*** Interestingly, they are also about responding to God at a particular time, when some unusual call to duty is placed upon us at a time of God's choosing, not *ours*.

You see, it is one thing to be reasonably compliant to God's revealed truth, ...to live an exemplary moral life, ...or to be pious and go to church, and even habitually observe spiritual disciplines..., but the real question is “Will you do *what* God asks, *when* He asks it?” Will you respond to the *new* thing, the *unexpected* request, the *unforeseen* direction from God? Will you follow through, when it is *costly*, or *inconvenient*? **Is every time God speaks, or reveals His will, an “appointed time” to you**, a time to quickly respond to God, ...or does God have to ***make an appointment with you?*** Does He and His directions have to fit around *your* schedule and plans, or **are you willing and able to make adjustments to fit your life around His directions?** Are you willing to do things His way, or do you have your own way of doing things that is inflexible, or even self-serving? **Jesus tells three different parables in Matthew 21 and 22, which bring up and deal with some of these questions.**

The first parable, and application, is in Matthew 21:28-32. Jesus had been teaching in the temple, and the chief priests and elders challenged Him, saying, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” Jesus shot back, “I will tell you, if you will answer one question: Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men?” At this, they began reasoning among themselves, “‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’”²⁶ “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.”²⁷ And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”²⁸ But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went.³⁰ The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go.³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They correctly responded, “The first.” But then Jesus made the application to them, saying that the tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of heaven before any of them, because they recognized John was sent by God, and responded to him, while the chief priests and elders had opposed him. They were supposedly the morally-observant, pious, religiously devoted ones, and yet when John came, they had no time for him, and even opposed him. **For all their religious practices and pious devotion, they had missed the move of God when it came, because it did not look as they expected it to.** And even afterwards, they did not repent and acknowledge their mistake.

The kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God, the relationships and people who are responsive and obedient to Him. The common people, the so-called “sinners” recognized the voice of God at work in John, but these religious leaders could not, ...or *would not*..., acknowledge God-at-work in John, and respond to him. In the parable, the first son resisted the father's command, but later relented and *did the will of the father*. The other *said that he would*, but when it came down to it, *he did not do the father's will*. **It does not matter what you say you are willing to do for God, or how much devotion you invest in the habit patterns of your daily life, if, when the time comes, you do not do what the Father asks.**

The second parable immediately follows this one. Here a landowner planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenant farmers to tend to, for a portion of the crop. When it came time to collect, however, they kept rejecting his servants who had been sent to them. They insulted them, beat them and even killed some. Finally, the landowner sent his son, thinking, “They will surely respect my son.” Instead, they said, “Look, he is the heir. Let us kill him and seize the land for ourselves.” Jesus asked the chief priests and elders, “Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what do you think he will do to those vine-growers?” They rightly concluded that he would bring them to justice, and rent out his vineyard to others, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper time. Jesus then made the application to them, by saying, “Therefore the kingdom of heaven will be taken away from you, and will be given to a people who will produce the fruit of it.”

In the kingdom of God, it is important to recognize that we are stewards, not owners. God always has the right to call upon us to “collect” from what He has entrusted us with. Those who are kingdom-people, who

recognize their role as servants of the King, are always responsive to give *whatever* and *whenever* the Master asks of them. Like the tenant farmers in the parable, everything we have has been supplied to us by God. Even our breath, our strength, and our motivation to work comes from Him. *All* that we have has ultimately come from Him. When He asks something from us, He generally only requires a portion. He has graciously permitted us to live on the greater portion. If He was to require *everything* from us, it would only be to give us a different duty assignment, with different provisions and opportunities. **We are His servants. He loves us; He will not mistreat us. But He has also given us responsibilities that are meant to help in the advancement of the kingdom.** As the King, ...the true supplier and owner of all that we have..., He will call upon us to give back, ...to give a portion of what He has allowed us to manage and produce. **Those in the kingdom, ...those who are responsive to the reign and rule of God..., will not only acknowledge God's right to call upon them to give back, but will even be eager to do so.** Are *you* willing to give what the Father asks from what He has entrusted to you?

The third parable is a bit more complicated. There are several layers to this one. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a king who made a wedding feast for his son. This was a big event, and it was a high honor to be invited to this special banquet for the king's son. People had been sent invitations ahead of time, so that they would save the date. When the time came that the feast was prepared, the king sent his servants to inform those who had been invited, so that they would come. **But they were unwilling to come. They had chosen to disregard the interests of the king in favor of their own interests. They paid no attention, and went their own way.** Some even mistreated and killed the king's servants. He sent his army to destroy those evildoers, and burned their city with fire. Meanwhile, the feast was prepared, the son and his bride were still planning on getting married, so the king instructed his servants to go out to the highways and byways and invite people to the feast. So they went out and gathered all they could find, both evil and good, to fill up the banquet hall of the king. Each guest was given festive wedding garments to wear, as part of the celebration, and to make everyone feel comfortable, ...so that the poor would not be embarrassed or uncomfortable in the presence of the wealthy. When the king came in to greet and inspect the guests, he saw a man there who was *not* wearing the provided wedding garments. When the king inquired, "How is it that you have come in here, not having wedding clothes?" When the man no answer, the king commanded that he be bound and thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Jesus finished with the punch line, "For many are called, but few are chosen."** This was a very catchy phrase in the Greek. The word for "called" is *klētos*, and the word for "chosen" is *eklektos*. **Many are invited, but few are selected.**

Again, **Jesus was speaking to religious people**, ...the religious elite of His day. In the parable, as in the lives of these religious leaders of Jesus' day, or in our own lives today, ***the issue is about being so caught up in our own interests that we disregard the invitations and interests of the King.*** Our situation is not that unlike that of the friends of the king in the parable: **We know that the King is going to invite us to join Him.** Jesus revealed to us His *modus operandi* in John 5:19. He never did anything out from Himself. He was focused on watching for what the Father was doing in and around Him. When He recognized that, it was an opportunity, an invitation to join with the Father in that scenario. It was an invitation to partner with the Father. **This is a fundamental principle of the kingdom of God. God will reveal His activity to us. This is an invitation to join Him in His work. To do that, however, inevitably means that we will have to put aside whatever we were doing, or planning to do.** The people in the parable did exactly the opposite: They *disregarded* the invitation of their king, in order to fulfill their own interests. Because they disregarded the invitation, they lost the opportunity. They lost the opportunity to feast at the king's banquet, invest in their relationship with him. In a similar way, **when we disregard the invitation of God to join Him in His work, we miss out on that partner experience with God. Not only that, but oftentimes the opportunity is gone, as well.** Sometimes, like in the parable, someone else can take our place. But sometimes there *is no one* in position to take our place.

Do you want to be selected to be a co-worker with Christ? Then you can't go forward in your own strength, or your own merit. You must put on the righteous garments of Christ's righteousness, given to you though grace, and taken by you through faith. The one who would come in his own strength or his self-righteousness will be rejected like the man in the parable, dressed in his own clothes. **You have to make yourself available to God, with no strings or limitations. You must be mindful that all you have and all you are belong to God, and are available for His use.** He is the Owner, you are the steward. **Then, expect His invitation for you to join Him in His work. Watch for His activity at work around you.** When you see Him at work, or you sense Him prompting you, that *IS* His invitation for you to join Him in His work. He wants to partner with you. He has put His Spirit in you to help you do what you could not do on your own. **Finally, don't just talk about doing the will of God, determine to do it. God is looking for people who will put aside all else, make themselves fully available to Him, and then put their faith into practice.** The kingdom of God is about obedience.