

Many are called, but few are chosen. That seems like another upside down trait for the kingdom of heaven. Why would you want to spend all of that time working on inviting countless people to only select a small handful? One would think that their resources could be used better by only inviting the individuals that they think they would want to choose.

But what if you're wrong about a person? I know, how could God be wrong about a person? He knows and sees everything. That's kind of his thing. He knows what we are going to do before we do. But we are human, there is always a chance that we aren't going to do what we are expected to do.

In a practical sense the idea of calling many to get a handful of people is a hard idea to get across to some people. It is always a point of contention when working with new managers and trying to train them on hiring.

Whenever I start training someone on how to hire, they always pushback. They tell me that they know how to hire. They've worked the positions, so they know what to look for in a candidate. I simply smile, because I remember I thought that too at one point.

The first time that I was in charge of hiring for a new store, I was so excited. I was arrogant and thought I had nothing to worry about. There is always someone looking for a job, especially back then. When you had an established restaurant, there was always somebody dropping off a resume. I thought this would be the same. But I was wrong.

I posted an ad on Indeed and got no responses. I put a big sign and banner in front of the building, and got nobody. I put postings on our website and weekly email, and again nothing. I couldn't understand why there was no one coming in and applying. We were quickly approaching the open and I didn't know what to do.

The king in the scripture reading was facing a time sensitive deadline as well. He had reached out to all of the influential people around him and no one came to his son's wedding. Not only that, but in some cases, they greatly mistreated the king's slaves and or killed them.

Both cases are similar to God inviting everyone to the kingdom of heaven. In my case, I sent out invitations to anyone and everyone around, but received no applicants. The king also sent out invitations, but not only was he ignored, his people were mistreated and murdered. This can be seen as a parallel for God's teachings.

Many rabbis, teachers, and other Jews went out to the world to spread his love and teach nonbelievers about the kingdom of heaven. Many times, they were chased away, arrested, or crucified for their beliefs. Even when God would smite the transgressors, it still did not remedy the situation and bring people into his kingdom.

The next thing the king did was send his remaining slaves into the streets to gather common people. They brought anyone and everyone they could find to the palace and prepared them for the banquet. Matthew's telling of the parable doesn't really cover that the king provided clothes for everyone so they would be dressed appropriately for the festival.

And that was why he was so angry with the one peasant that was not dressed in the wedding robe. The king had made certain that everyone there would be in accordance and not be out of place. He was insulted, he had put so much effort into preparing the wedding banquet. The dinner was extravagant, the king had slaughtered his oxen and calves for this special occasion. He even provided clothing for everyone in attendance. And everyone accepted his gifts and did what was expected of them to enter. All that is, except one.

Many people criticize Matthew for the amount of violence he shared in this parable. The king destroys the initial groups that treated his people badly. And then he binds and throws the one individual out for not dressing appropriately. To us today, it seems excessive.

But we need to remember that Matthew was a tax collector. He was never welcome anywhere. These analogies make sense to him. He was always excluded and shunned. These images could be about how he felt he was being treated as a servant of God. We can feel his anger and frustration to those that he is trying to help into the kingdom of heaven, but are too blind or bigoted to see it.

He has helped so many find their way into the kingdom of heaven. He has given us all guidance through his gospel. We use his words whenever we say the Lord's Prayer. But, he still sees the one. The one that was given the robe and everything that he needed to ascend, or join the party as it were, and refuses to do it.

That is a concept that is very hard for managers to understand sometimes. It is a point that I forget frequently. We can only help people as much as they want to be helped. We can provide them with all the training in the world, we can give them all the tools that they need to succeed, we can remind them frequently what they need to do, how and when. But the final decision to accept the help and use the tools provided is by them.

I had a cook in Omaha that I did everything I could to help. I trained her. I spent more time working alongside her making sure that she knew her recipes and kept her times down. I changed her schedule and created shifts for her so that she didn't miss her shifts. I believed in her and did everything I could to help make her a success. But, my biggest obstacle was her.

Like I said, I changed her schedule so that she didn't miss shifts. I knew that she went out drinking on Thursday nights, so I quit scheduling her to open on Fridays, because I never knew when she was going to show up, if at all. One weekend she didn't show up at all. She called me on Monday and she had spent the weekend in jail.

I should have fired her then. But, I didn't. I told her to come in for her next shift and we would work out whatever we needed to do next. She came in, but then she missed her next shift and then another one. And eventually I fired her. You would think that would be the end of it. But, it wasn't.

No, she came back a couple of months later and told me that she had just gotten out of rehab and was hoping to get her job back. I told her to come in and we would talk about it. The time she was supposed to be there came and went. And she never showed. I had given her all that she needed to succeed and instead, she just blew it off. She wouldn't help herself.

And that is what Jesus is trying to say to us. God invites everyone to the kingdom of heaven. Some of us are tasked with searching out and finding people and teaching them about his love and grace. Some accept his wisdom and are baptized and live a righteous lifestyle assuring their admittance into the kingdom of heaven. But not everyone makes that choice.

Some people ignore his efforts right away and ridicule and try to block God's teachings. While others accept his grace when it's convenient, but ignore his truth and choose to be an outcast. Their choices are their own. We are not responsible for their choices. We can give them the tools and the opportunities, but we can not make them love and accept God. We can only hope they will make the right choice.