

My name is Daniel, I am 42, I am a programmer, and I am a proud single father of two. And I am the funniest guy on my block.

My name is Monica. I am a 20-year-old marketing major and I am Vietnamese. I am a very hard worker.

My name is Alicia. I live in a retirement community. I love to play bingo on Tuesday nights and I like to think of myself as being a very nice grandma.

All three of these are very simple statements of identity. A simple description of who you are. And looking at the description of the people in the parable, you might feel that none of them really contain any piece of your identity. But while it might seem hard to believe, you have a piece of your identity in the midst of this parable.

Let's first look at our first characters. The first group are ones that I like to call: the ignorers. These are a group of people who the King invited to the feast. They have received their notice of the event, and when the servants show up on their doorstep to tell them the time is here, they do not care. **“they refused to come”**. And after the servants show up a second time, telling them again... they have better things to do. **“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business”** These people have no interest in what the king has to offer. Apathetic, self-centered, self-seeking, self-serving. They have more important things to do. They have better things to occupy their time. I've got greater things, pressing things, to do. I don't have time for you.

The next group of characters have some similarities with the first group, the ignorers, but they take it one step further. I define them as: the mockers. They too, were notified. They too, agreed to come. But when the servants came saying: “everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet!”, they act in violence and blatant opposition. **“The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them”**. These people are spiteful. They not only aren't coming, but they want the King to know what they think of his invitation. I don't care about your feast, and I don't care that you know I don't care. In fact, I will show you just how much I don't. I don't fear your authority, I don't value your invitation, I don't care about your feast or you.

The third group is completely different from the first two. They are: The nobodies. They are just the grubby little street people. The King says to his servants: **“So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”**<sup>10</sup> **So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good** They aren't easily found. They're not in the castles, or the manors, or the mansions. A hodge podge smattering of good and bad people in the alleys, at the side roads, in the dirty country paths. They weren't invited at first. They really don't have status. They don't have anything to offer the King. They're really just a nameless mob of everyday nobodies. But while they don't have any outward value, they come. And the wedding hall is filled.

And we have a final lone character: the stubborn. A man, among the nameless bunch. A single lone reveler, who does not have the proper wedding clothes. This man, who wants to enjoy the benefits, but

wants to do it his way. Wedding feast, yes please! I have to wear wedding clothes? No thanks. I want to have what you offer, but I will do it on my own terms.

But we're still missing one final character. The last character, the most important character, the most central character in the parable: the king. Now, the King's son is getting married, and he wants to celebrate in the way only a King can do. He sent out his invitations to his beautiful wedding feast. He owns oxen, and cattle, and servants, and a huge wedding hall enough to host as many people as he pleases. He is Wealthy. He is gracious. He is kind. When the time comes for the feast, he wants to share his food, his possessions, his joy, with others. **"Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet."**

After hearing this parable and analyzing the characters, my guess is that most of you probably don't identify yourselves with, well, any of them. I wouldn't suppose that you would loudly and proudly proclaim I am a self-centered apathetic guest. I am a violent, defiant, disrespectful person. I'm definitely not a random nobody with no real value. And I'm not someone who always wants to do things my way. . I am not an ignorer, a mocker, a nobody, or the stubborn. No, that's not right, I am definitely not in this parable.

Even if it's hard to admit, we often act so similar to them when our God, THE King, invites us to his feast. He extends his hand to us and we say no. We've got better things to do. Not now, Lord. I cannot go to church, and participate in the sacrament, I have more important things to do. He wants us to be with him, and we despise his offer. We hate that he tells us what to do and what not to do. We like to take all the benefits without having to follow any guidelines. We take his offers of good things, but we like to take the credit. We all ignore him, we all mock him, we all are stubborn in our ways. You, yes you. Are in this parable.

But the most important thing to focus on is not our faults, not our mistakes, not our attitudes. No, the important thing to focus on in this parable is not OUR identities, but the identity, the actions, and attitudes of the King.

I'm sure that you noticed the punishment that the King exacts on those who refuse him, on those who disrespect him, on those who mock him. But you might have overlooked the more crucial part of the King. You see, the King is, well, king. Everything is his. His wedding. His oxen. His invitation. He doesn't owe anyone anything. He doesn't owe his subjects an invitation to the feast. But what does he do? He sends for them. And after the ones he invited don't come? He doesn't owe anyone a second chance. But what does he do? He sends another invitation. And when his guest list comes up empty? He makes sure that the celebration does not go to waste. He sends his servants to find anyone, and everyone to come. He went to find them.

And that's identity of our God. Our God who is not content to let what is his, be only his. He is not satisfied to keep it from others. Here's what is the most important part of this text, and here's what it means for you, and who you are: Somewhere, at some point in time, God came looking for you. God came looking for you. Even though you might feel a commoner, like a grubby street urchin, like an

unimportant country peasant. God cared enough that he went to find you. He sent his servants down every back alley, down every dark road, down every twisting turn to find you. To bring you, yes you, to his feast.

And it was not because you deserve it, not because you could do it all by yourself, but purely because he cares about you. Because he wants you to be with him, because he wants you to enjoy the richness of all that he has. He went to find you, to give you the forgiveness of sins. To give you the blessings which come from the palms of his hands. To give you a wedding robe washed white with the blood of Christ. To give you a seat at the banquet of everlasting life.

You are no longer a dirty nobody in the alley. You are his guest in the finest clothes. You are no more a starving peasant in the country, you are a friend feasting on the finest food. You are no longer a random somebody, you are God's precious guest. The questions of who you are in this world, and your identity, shift and change, but the most essential and most beautiful part of you is not something that you have done, but something God has done for you.

My name is Daniel, and I am someone who God went looking for. I am a child of God.

My name is Monica, and I am someone whom God sent for. I am precious to God.

My name is Alicia, and I am someone whom Jesus died for. I am a guest at his banquet.

Amen.