



*God is rich in mercy,  
Because of the love he has for us  
Ephesians 2:4*

## **Baby It's Cold Outside**

**Read:** Matthew 22:1-14

In the gospel Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast. A king invites several prominent guests to a banquet and each declines the invitation. Angered by his rejection, the king responds by opening his banquet hall to everyone. Jesus uses this story to teach his audience about heaven and hell.

The wedding feast is an analogy for heaven (Isaiah 25:6-10). Each individual receives a personal invitation, but not all who are invited desire to attend. Those who decline choose to exclude themselves, leaving hell as their only other option.

Hell is often depicted as a place of eternal fire, but here Jesus describes it in another way. He states that those who are excluded from the banquet are cast into the “darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13). Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting on the passage, says that gnashing of teeth takes place in the cold. Thus, Hell could be a place of infinite cold. Scripture depicts God as light (1 John 1:5) and an “all consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:19). Darkness and cold are the opposite of light and heat. Therefore, in the absence of God, hell is both dark and cold.

This self realized darkness results from a hardness of heart. St. Thomas Aquinas says; “For things that are frozen are hard to pierce...Consequently the freezing or hardening of the heart is a disposition incompatible with love.” In choosing a lifestyle that is contrary to God’s will, we are preventing God’s love and light from piercing our hearts. Hot and cold, light and dark, cannot coexist in our hearts. Eventually we will have to remove our garment of darkness and choose to clothe ourselves in God’s love. The choice is ultimately ours. God does not want us to reject His invitation, but if our hearts grow cold, we will not be able to answer His call.