

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Sunday 18 October 2020

Worship Materials



Introduction

During our Sunday services we are looking at some of Jesus' parables. Each of these stories tells us something about God's kingdom or reign of love. And each of these stories contains a challenge for those who hear it as well as an invitation to live differently today in accordance with God's purposes for creation.

Praise CH4 192 All my hope on God is founded

1. All my hope on God is founded;
all my trust he will renew,
safe through change and chance
he guides me,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

God's great goodness lasts forever,
deep his wisdom passing thought:
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

2. Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray God's
trust;
though with care and toil we build
them,
tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Still from earth to God in heaven
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, his Son.
Hear Christ call
one and all:
those who follow shall not fall.

The Word of God: St Matthew 22:1-14

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, “Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.” ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.” ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 ‘But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?” And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, “Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.’

Reflection

Marino is a village in Italy. It is there that Frascati the staple white wine that is served in every trattoria in Rome is produced. And every year in the village of Marino they hold a great party to celebrate the wine harvest.

This festival dates back to the Middle Ages and it lasts all day with stalls, floats, bands, parades and coloured lights. Flowers and grapes adorn everything in sight. And the highlight of this celebration is the moment when 3000 litres of the year’s newly pressed wine flows through the fountain in the centre of the village to a backdrop of fireworks.

But one year recently a problem arose. The revellers waited in vain for the wine to flow through the fountain. The creative plumbing that normally transforms the water into wine went a bit awry. Instead of feeding the wine into the fountain, the engineers managed to pipe it into the domestic water supply. You can imagine the surprise and delight of many of the local residents when they turned on their kitchen taps!

Not everyone was pleased however. One woman said that she had been cleaning the floor at the time. As she refilled her bucket she noticed a smell of alcohol. “Wine is fine for drinking, she complained, but not for cleaning!” There’s always one!!

That true story bears a certain similarity to today’s parable. In Marino it was the people who were at home getting on with their normal daily tasks, who found themselves on the receiving end of the gift of new wine. In Jesus story it was the people who were out in the highways and byways, concentrating on the task of staying alive by whatever means they could find, who suddenly and unexpectedly find themselves, invited to the wedding feast of the king’s son.

And perhaps both these stories have something to say to us about the Kingdom of God, and its surprising and joyful nature. In the midst of all the bad, sad, and distressing news

that is coming our way at present the message which the Church has to proclaim is one of good news – it is one of hope. In Jesus parable story it is portrayed as an invitation to the biggest and best party imaginable –no restriction on numbers, no physical distancing, no masks – just the joy and celebration of a wedding feast. It is joy, real and lasting joy, that Jesus offers the world. And that joy finds its roots in the grace of God.

In the bible Jesus often talks about grace. He describes a world in which God's grace flows freely; where the sun shines on the righteous and the unrighteous alike, where birds gather seeds freely, where wild flowers burst into bloom on rocky hillsides, where both bad and good are invited to share in the feast of the Kingdom. To look at the world through Jesus eyes is to see grace everywhere.

So what is this grace? One writer put it like this "Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love. God loves people because of who he is, not because of who we are. Grace means that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more. But grace also means that there is nothing we can do to make God love us less. And that is the scandal of grace. Grace is not fair. And perhaps that is one of the reasons that the Church so often fails to communicate the grace of God.

For when we begin to contemplate the grace of God then we are brought face to face with our own ungraciousness. For the world does not run by grace. In the world everything depends on what I do, on what I achieve. And often the church is like a mirror reflecting society in this regard. But the church is not called to be a mirror but to be a window revealing another way. And that way is the way of Jesus Christ. In his Kingdom the way forward does not depend on our performance but on his.

In the film the Last Emperor, the young child anointed as the last emperor of China, lives a magical life of luxury with a thousand servants at his command. "What happens when you do wrong?" his brother asks. "When I do wrong, someone else is punished," the boy emperor replies. To demonstrate he breaks a jar and one of the servants is beaten. Jesus reversed that ancient pattern when he died on the cross. When the servants erred the king took the punishment upon himself, dying on the cross to bring forgiveness and new life to the world. This is grace and it is grace that is on offer to all who accept Christ's invitation to the royal party.

But of course we have the choice of whether or not to accept the invitation - to cooperate with God's grace. Matthew's version of Jesus parable has that strange bit in it - it's almost a parable within a parable - about the king throwing out the guest who refused to wear the wedding garments. That sounds very odd to our ears. Yet not so strange perhaps when we understand that in ancient times in the east when a king invited guests to a feast, that king would also supply robes for the guests to wear. This idea is picked up in the bible.

For example, the prophet Isaiah rejoices because God has clothed him with the garments of salvation and covered him with the robe of righteousness. In the early days of the Church when the first converts to Christianity were baptised they were given clean white robes to put on. These clean white robes signified the joy and happiness and newness of life that Jesus offers.

Against that background perhaps we can begin to understand this parable within a parable. When those who are originally invited to the wedding feast neglect to take up the

invitation, the king sends out an invite to the people of the city and countryside. They come from far and near, the good and the bad. The grace of God is extended to all. People of all walks of life come flocking to the feast. As they arrive at the hall they are welcomed by the king's servants and given the wedding clothes specially made for the occasion – but one guest refuses the gift – there is always one! He cannot quite bring himself to accept Jesus offer of forgiveness and new life and so brings about his own exclusion from the feast. He is no less loved by God – yet he refuses the life that God offers.

We cannot be touched by the grace of God and go on living life the old way. The joy that life in Christ offers will not allow that. The grace we receive has to be shared with others. As someone once said “Grace is Christianity’s best gift to the world”.

Let me come to a close with the story of a man called Peter Greave. He contracted leprosy while stationed in India. He returned to England, half-blind, partially paralysed, to live on a compound run by a group of Anglican sisters. Unable to work, an outcast from society, he turned bitter. He thought of suicide. He made elaborate plans to escape the compound but always backed out because he had nowhere to go. One morning, uncharacteristically for him, he got up very early and strolled around the grounds. Hearing a buzzing noise, he followed it to the chapel where the sisters were praying for the patients whose names were written on the walls. Among the names he found his own. Somehow that experience changed the course of his life. He felt welcome. He felt he belonged. He felt wanted. He felt grace.

Today let us pray that the grace of God which has touched our lives might flow like new wine through us into the streets of our world, so that others might know the joy of God’s Kingdom now and for all eternity.

Pointers for Prayer

- Those suffering from or bereaved by the corona virus
- Those who have lost a loved one for other reasons during the pandemic
- The NHS as Covid-19 numbers rise
- The governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and their advisers
- University students and staff
- Businesses struggling and all who are facing redundancy and financial hardship
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the increased restrictions
- Local congregations as they take difficult decisions on how and when to re-open for worship

Praise CH4 721 We lay our broken world

We lay our broken world
in sorrow at your feet,
haunted by hunger, war and fear,
oppressed by power and hate.

We bring our broken towns,
our neighbours hurt and bruised;
you show us how old pain and wounds
for new life can be used.

Here human life seems less
than profit, might and pride,
though to unite us all in you,
you lived and loved and died.

We bring our broken loves,
friends parted, families torn;
then in your life and death we see
that love must be reborn.

We bring our broken selves
 Confused and closed and tired
 Then through your healing gift of grace
 New purpose is inspired.

Come Spirit, on us breathe
 With life and strength anew
 Find in us love, and hope and trust,
 And lift us up to you.

You might like to close your time of worship with the Lord's prayer.

Notices

Next Sunday 9.45am Joint Worship with communion (Service commences 10.00am)

If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your landline please contact:

Rob e-mail sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org or Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail smbichard@aol.com.

Tuesday 11.00am Tarves Session Coffee when we will be talking about Remembrance Sunday.

Wednesday Worship Tarves Church 2.00pm a short act of worship in the Church.

Thursday 22 October Community Bible Experience 4.00pm on when we will be discussing discoveries we make on reading Jeremiah 1-24.

Alpha On-line An invitation from our friends in Methlick to anyone who would like to join them. This will run on a Wednesday evening 7.30pm-8.45pm commencing 4th November. To register please contact Jeannie Price **Email:** jp222@btinternet.com or Tel 07764221414 before 30 October.

Care in the Community if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887. If you are aware of anyone in Barthol Chapel please contact James Hepburn 806611.

Pastoral Care If you would like to speak to the minister please contact Alison 851295.