

15th October, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.



Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
"Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Thou burning sun with golden beam,
thou silver moon with softer gleam,
O praise Him, O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,
O praise Him! Alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
ye lights of ev'ning, find a voice,
O praise Him, O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

And all ye men of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part,
O sing ye! Alleluia!

Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and on Him cast your care;
O praise Him, O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship Him in humbleness;
O praise Him! Alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One;
O praise Him, O praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright

Read Romans 5:1-11, Matthew 22:1-14: Inviting Jesus

This Sunday, another parable. Jesus teaching in the temple courts about the Kingdom of heaven using parables. This story is part of this collective, so whilst it can stand alone, it is not in isolation – do take the opportunity to read them together.

Today, we have a king inviting people to a wedding feast. However, though an extraordinary privilege to be invited, the invitees didn't want to come. There would have been free food, free wedding clothes provided, a chance to 'nose' around the king's palace and see how the other half live.

Just imagine having been invited to one of our own royal's wedding feasts. Would you turn it down. The excuses given are terrible. There were apparently other things to do – fields and businesses to attend to. But despite the rude rejections, a second was sent which met with terrible violence with servants being mistreated and even killed.

This discourtesy and treason provoked a terrible judgement. The city was burned and the murderers executed.

The king now extends the invitation to all – the worthless gain great worth – and with free food and free clothes, they come. But one man refusing the offered clothes, perhaps thinking too much of his own 'best' outfit and of himself, insults the host. He is violently ejected.

Jesus states that many are invited but few accept, demonstrating their 'chosen' status – the Jewish people of the time, understood themselves as especially 'chosen'.

So what does this mean?

The king, of course is God. How awesome to be invited by God into relationship – adopted as a child of *the* King. We are fools to reject it – but many do. We are fools also, to think we are good enough, and underestimate our accountability to God. We cannot come on our own terms – God owns us – we need him and we owe him, everything! Read Psalm 49:7-9, Isaiah 64:6, and Isaiah 61:10. As Jesus warns in the previous

chapter: ‘... *Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.*’ Matthew 21:31.

Uncomfortable as it is in our society, we will be held accountable, judgement will come. There is a way into relationship with God, but narrow is this way and few find it, but broad is the way to destruction (See Matthew 7:13-14).

In Jesus’ parable the city and the rejectors and murderers are destroyed; in AD 70, Jerusalem and the people’s beloved temple was destroyed. And, this same country is being torn apart again today! There is a collective and individual judgement. The individual who brazenly assumes that they’ll be let in on their terms discovers that they’re are much mistaken.

There is significant violence and destruction in this parable – Matthew rarely holds back on the horror. His is the certificate 15 version of the Gospels. But such is the violence and destruction of sin – just look at the state of our world – and such is the violence and horror of our salvation (the cross). Many in our sanitised society assume that awful things happen to others not us, and therefore judgement surely will happen to others not us. We assume someone else is responsible – we are quick to hold others (e.g. politicians) accountable but less quick to assume ourselves accountable. But God will hold us all accountable – unless we fall on Jesus.

All are welcome into the feasts of Heaven – including the unlikely – the worthless, gain great worth. If we hold to Jesus, he will hold to us, “They’re with me.” Read Isaiah 61:10 again. We are invited to a wedding banquet – into our wedding. We are both collectively the bride of Christ and, individually, children of the King. We are invited into the most intimate relationship with the Almighty God, the King of Kings, *The* Lord and our Saviour. This is so astoundingly wonderful. We are made to worship and delight in the wonderful God who has saved us. And, also, to join in with others taking the invitations of God to his feast, to the whole world. We are now the ‘invitations’ to others. Invite others to Alpha, your small group, church events, or services – speak about Jesus and the hope, the glory, he offers.

Collect: Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity: *O God, forasmuch as without you we are not able to please you; mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. Oct.18th & Nov. 15th at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: Oct 25th at 11am, in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays.
- COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.