

Christ Church 11th October 2020 at 10:30

Call to Worship: Psalm 100: 2a, 4, 5

“Worship the Lord with gladness; enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his love endures for ever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Hymn StF 137 New every morning is the love <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkPXz3tvA5M>

1. New every morning is the love
our waking and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

2. New mercies each returning day
around us hover while we pray,
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

3. If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still of countless price
God will provide for sacrifice.

4. The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we ought to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.

5. Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,
fit us for perfect rest above,
and help us, this and every day
to live more nearly as we pray.

Prayers: Prayer of Approach and Adoration

O God, our God, we come before you now to offer you our praise and our worship.

There us so much going on in our world and in our lives. Some of us are anxious about our present circumstances and the future; some of us are full of excitement and hope; some of us have deep hurts which affect the way we live day by day. Now, as your people, we come to worship you.

You watch over us in times of uncertainty; you lead us into new experiences of your love and care; you challenge us to face new situations with you; and when the experiences of life bring us sorrow or pain, you are there to give us comfort and peace.

You know each one of us better than we know ourselves, yet you go on loving us. Most of all, in sending Jesus, your Son, into the world you have shown us how much you love us. In Jesus you reached out to give us your life and so we worship you.

We praise for the gift of your Holy Spirit in our lives, showing us where we have gone wrong, working in us to cleanse and to heal, giving us strength to live your way, and guiding us in our journey of life with you.

O God, You are our God and we are your people. We offer the words and music of this time together in praise to you. When we leave this place help us to go on worshipping you by the way we live our lives.

We pray in Jesus' name. *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

All-age Talk: Invitations

Show an invitation. 'How do you feel when you get an invitation?' (Pleased? Excited? Worried?) What do you do? (Reply, buy a present, plan what you'll wear.) Jesus told a story about important people being invited to a wedding by a king. When the day of the wedding arrived they didn't turn up. They preferred to do other things. So the king gave orders for lots of ordinary people, poor people, handicapped people, to be invited. Along they all came to the wedding party. Jesus told the story because he wanted us to know that God, the King, wants all of us to be his friends, his special family. We come to church, or Messy Church, or join services like this on Zoom, so that we can enjoy being part of God's family and learn more about how God wants us to live as his family.



Hymn & Prayer (JC slot) StF 121 Autumn Days

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByLoE8c6yAk>

- 1 Autumn days when the grass is jewelled,
and the silk inside a chestnut shell,
jet planes meeting in the air to get refuelled,
all these things I love so well,
*So I mustn't forget,
no, I mustn't forget
to say a great big thank-you,
I mustn't forget.*
- 2 Clouds that look like familiar faces,
and a winter's moon with frosted rings,
smell of bacon as I fasten up my laces,
and the song the milkman sings.
- 3 Whipped-up spray that is rainbow-scattered,
and a swallow curving in the sky,
shoes so comfy though they're worn-out
and they're battered,
and the taste of apple-pie.
- 4 Scent of gardens when the rain's been falling,
and a minnow darting down a stream,
picked-up engine that's been stuttering and stalling,
and a win for my home team.

Estelle White (b.1925)

Blessing as children go to JC

Reading Matthew 22:1-14 *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

¹ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴ "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

⁵ "But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸ "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and 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 wedding clothes. ¹² 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.

¹³ "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹⁴ "For many are invited, but few are chosen.

Reading Philippians 4:1-9

¹ Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Hymn StF 394 Spirit of God, unseen as the wind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qywGaKEM2IA>

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove,
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love.*

2 Without your help we fail our Lord,
we cannot live his way ;
we need your power, we need your strength,
following Christ each day.

1 You spoke to us long, long ago,
gave us the written word ;
we read it still, needing its truth,
through it God's voice is heard.

Margaret V. Old

Sermon The Great Invitation (Matthew 22:1-14; Philippians 4:1-9)

Most of us have a pretty good idea what is expected of us when we are invited to a special occasion, like a wedding. We don't usually decline such invitations without a very good reason. We also take on board the duties and expectations that such an invitation places on us. Of course, if you have ever invited a lot of people to any kind of occasion, you'll know that there are usually a few people who don't reply and have to be chased up to find out whether or not they are coming. I suppose that sort of thing has been going on for centuries, human nature being what it is.

As you know, Jesus was very good at telling stories as a way of communicating what he wanted to say to people. And that's what happened in our reading from Matthew's gospel. Jesus told a story about people being invited to a wedding, in order to illustrate some truths about the kingdom of God. Some of the details of the story connect with our experience today, but other parts reflect a culture and traditions that are strange to us. The people of Jesus' day would have recognised Herod as the king who issued the invitations to his son's wedding. They would have been able to think of a number of such weddings in the Herod family over the years. Such an occasion was an opportunity for Herod to display his generosity and his magnificence, and also to keep the invited members of the aristocracy in a state of indebtedness to the king. Everybody who was anybody would be invited.

The day of the wedding arrived and, as was the custom, servants were sent out to escort the wedding guests to the freshly cooked meal. A few years ago we were invited to the wedding of the son of our Sikh neighbours. We were collected from home by coach and transported to the

Gurdwara in Slough, where we were given light refreshments and then enjoyed the wedding ceremony. Afterwards we were taken on to the reception at Dorney Lake and finally returned home at the end of the day. There was no question of our being left to find our own way there and back. That sort of courtesy seems to have been what happened in Jesus' story, except that the guests refused to come. They weren't interested, or they preferred to do other things, or worse still, they attacked or even killed the servants. When he found out, the enraged king took his revenge on the ungrateful people who had spurned his invitation.

The time sequence gets a bit unreal as the story continues, but an occasion like this would not be over in one day. The same banquet is still waiting for people to come and enjoy it, but substitute guests are needed. And so the king tells his servants to go out to the street corners, the places where undesirable people, such as beggars, might hang about and to bring in anyone they find there. So that is what the servants did, and they gathered in good and bad people, we are told, and they all came to enjoy the banquet. And then the king came to see how they were all getting on and he noticed one man wasn't wearing wedding clothes. Now, we might think that none of the guests would be suitably dressed because they had been hauled in off the streets. We have to assume that some sort of party clothing would have been issued to the guests as they arrived but this man had slipped in without getting properly attired. Perhaps he just came in for a good meal and didn't want to be bothered with the ceremony of the wedding feast. His dress was disrespectful to the king and his son. When challenged by the king he was speechless, and, on the king's orders he was taken away and punished.

In interpreting this story we should not read too much into every detail. For instance, the king in the story is very human – vain, fickle and cruel to the extreme. Yet the story was intended to teach something about God's offer to bring people into the kingdom of heaven. I'm going to say something now about three lessons for the people who first heard the story.

The first lesson is that those in Israel who scorned and ignored Jesus were in danger of missing out on God's grace. Over many centuries the Jewish people had been nurtured as God's special people. Their history is punctuated with special revelations, through their leaders and prophets, of how God wanted them to live and to relate to Him. By the time of Jesus, there was a strong aristocracy of religious leaders who thought they knew how God should be worshipped, and how his followers should live their lives. Many of them could not accept that God should enter the world through an ordinary family in Galilee. They rejected Jesus in spite of his remarkable teaching and his healing miracles. Their position in the hierarchy of Jewish society could not save them. Entry into the kingdom of God was entirely dependent on acceptance of his Son, Jesus.

The second lesson is that God would gather in a new people. The invitation to be part of God's kingdom was open to all, whatever their status in society. Throughout Jewish history, God had always shown a special care for the poor and the marginalised. Yet the religious leaders of the day seemed to have forgotten this. Jesus was often criticised by the scribes and Pharisees because of the company he kept. He even ate with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus came to call those who would recognise their own unworthiness, and accept his invitation to come and be part of God's kingdom. No other credential was needed.

The third lesson is that acceptance of the invitation brings with it some responsibility. The wedding guests were expected to be properly dressed and enjoy the banquet. Those who are part of God's kingdom are required to be fully committed, to enjoy his company, to give honour to his Son and to learn of his love.

It is this third lesson which is most important for us today. As people who have experienced God's grace in calling us into a special relationship with him, we need to work at that

relationship day by day as we live our lives. The passage we read from Philippians gives us some practical guidance in this matter.

Paul was writing to a particular group of people who were known to him. He speaks of them with great affection and even refers to them as his 'joy and crown'. He both delights in them in the present and regards them as proof of his faithful work for the Lord. Paul urges them to stand firm in the faith, just as soldiers might be urged to hold their ground in spite of difficulties.

Then Paul has a personal word for two women who have had some kind of disagreement. They both appear to have some importance in the church at Philippi and have been co-workers with Paul in the past. We don't know whether the quarrel is a personal matter or whether each has a different point of view about some matter which could divide the church. Paul pleads with them to come to some agreement, in the Lord, and asks others to mediate and help them in this. It is not uncommon in church life for people to have disagreements, but too often such differences have been allowed to grow into enmity and even division. Paul was reminding the Philippians that these women had once worked together for the cause of the gospel, and they needed to return to that focus and come to some reconciliation, if necessary with the help of others.

Then Paul urged his readers to rejoice always, and he repeats the exhortation. This isn't a shallow feeling but a deep joy and gladness based on their relationship with Jesus. No matter what the external circumstances, the Christians relationship with Jesus gives him reason to rejoice at all times. A person who is joyful is likely to have a positive approach to others. "Let your gentleness be evident to all," says Paul. The word used suggests being reasonable and sweet-natured when dealing with difficult people, and being able to deal with them calmly and fairly. I'm sure you can think of people who have a gift for this, whereas I know it's something I have to work at. "The Lord is near," says Paul. These are encouraging words for us all to remember.

Then Paul reminds the Philippians not to worry about things but to let God know what troubles them, and what their needs are, not forgetting to thank God for all that he has done for them, and for all that He means to them. Such prayer is the antidote to anxiety, and it results in receiving the peace of God. This peace calms both our minds, and our hearts – in other words-our feelings.

Paul goes on to give a list of things to focus the mind on. The list is open to wide interpretation, and the advice is not specific to Christians. When I was in High School, verses 4 to 8 of this chapter of Philippians were read at the end of each school year, if not at the end of every term, so the Authorised version is locked into my memory. The Christian church certainly doesn't have a monopoly on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable, but it does have the supreme example of these qualities in Jesus. These are the qualities that those who are part of the kingdom of heaven should set their minds on and live by.

To sum up, the invitation to be part of the kingdom of heaven is offered, not only to the Jews but to all people of every time and race. Acceptance of the invitation brings with it responsibility to honour God's Son, Jesus, to enjoy his presence, to trust him in the difficulties of life, to live and work in unity with other Christians, and thereby, to experience the peace of God in our hearts and minds.

Amen

Hymn StF 693 Beauty for brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbtN4vyPBxU>

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for all people,
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Refrain

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

Refrain

Graham Kendrick

Dedication of Offering

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for your world. When you made it, it was good, beautiful and perfect. We are sorry for the ways in which we spoil your world by the things we do and the choices we make. We thank you for those who remind us that cannot go on using and misusing the earth's resources. Help us to be willing to change the way we live so that the earth will be sustained for future generations.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for those for whom daily living is a struggle. Those, in the poorest countries, who must work long hours for little reward, and barely have enough to feed their families. Those, in our own country, who have no work because of Covid19, and don't know how they'll pay the bills and feed their families. Open our eyes to help in any way we can.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

We pray for young people everywhere; for those who are at school, college or university, especially those just settling in to a new school or living away from home for the first time. We pray for all those facing the restrictions which Covid 19 has brought to the universities; that they will be able to cope with the new challenges and settle into different ways of learning.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

We thank you for those who are showing how we can live with people from different places and of different ethnic backgrounds. May the Holy Spirit help us to see through the eyes of love and not suspicion and mistrust.

We pray for those we know to be in any kind of need:

For those who are lonely and alone, for those who feel old and forgotten, for those who feel sad and uncertain,

For those who are ill, and those who care for them and love them, and for those who grieve the loss of a loved one.

(Invite those in church then those on Zoom to mention those they know to need our prayers)

May we all take our share in showing the love of God to those he sends us each day.

Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

In the name of Jesus whose healing touch reached out to those in need.

Amen

Hymn StF 167 Colours of day dawn into the mind <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwxAi12UiJ0>

1

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
and let's give the message to the people we meet.

*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.*

2

Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness are needing a friend.

3

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.

Sue McClellan, John Paculabo, Keith Ryecroft

Blessing

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore,

Amen