

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 WORSHIP AT HOME**  
**GOSPEL Matthew 22.1-14 The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**  
Welcome to our act of Worship

Call to worship

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>...The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything... Philippians 4v4-6 (*selected verses*)

A Prayer of Approach

Lord God, faithful and loving,  
we do not always feel like rejoicing.  
Even as we gather to worship you,  
our minds are sometimes distracted and  
elsewhere, weighed down by the burdens of our  
lives.  
Help us, in this moment, to find it within our  
hearts to rejoice in your constancy  
and loving care for us.  
People of God, let us rejoice. **Amen.**

HYMN

*T Gopsal*

**Rejoice the Lord is King!**

Your Lord and King adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks and sing,  
and triumph evermore.

*Lift up your heart!*

*lift up your voice!*

*Rejoice! again I say, rejoice!*

Jesus, the Saviour reigns,  
the God of truth and love:  
when he had purged our stains,  
he took his seat above.

His kingdom cannot fail;  
he rules o'er earth and heaven;  
the keys of death and hell  
are to our Jesus given.

He sits at God's right hand  
till all his foes submit,  
and bow to his command,  
and fall beneath his feet:

Rejoice in glorious hope!  
Jesus the Judge shall come  
and take his servants up  
to their eternal home:

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice,  
the trump of God shall sound: Rejoice!*

HP243, MP575, RS657, STF335

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the  
Wiltshire United Area)

Prayers of Praise

O God, you are gracious and compassionate:  
we praise you.

**Your goodness and mercy last for ever.**

You are loving and forgiving:  
we praise you.

**Your goodness and mercy last for ever.**

You have promised us a place in your house:  
we praise you.

**Your goodness and mercy last for ever.**

**Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

For the times we have turned down your  
invitation,

Generous God, **forgive us.**

For the times we have taken  
your invitation for granted,

Generous God, **forgive us.**

For the times

we have feasted on fine food,  
but ignored the plight of the hungry,

Generous God, **forgive us.**

For the times we have chosen  
our own way and not yours,

Generous God, **forgive us.**

Remove all our self-centredness  
and help us be worthy guests  
of your banquet.

**Amen.**

HYMN **All I once held dear,**

*T Knowing you*

All I once held dear, built my life upon  
All this world reveres, and wars to own  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

*Knowing you, Jesus*

*Knowing you, there is no greater thing*

*You're my all, you're the best*

*You're my joy, my righteousness*

*And I love you, Lord*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more  
To be found in you and known as yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Oh, to know the power of your risen life  
And to know You in Your sufferings

To become like you in your death, my Lord  
So with you to live and never die  
HP-, MP799, RS, STF489

### Ministry of the Word of God

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 23 Year A  
Isaiah 25.1-9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4.1-9;

### **Matthew 22.1-14**

*The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

**Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again 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." <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." <sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then 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." <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.'**

This is the Gospel of Christ.  
**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

### Reflection

"Are you a real vicar?" It happened on a train whilst I was on my way to see some patients in RUH. I had my bike and was dressed in lycra. As we got near Bath whilst putting on a clerical shirt so came the question.

Today's Gospel parable about a person inappropriately dressed is disturbing! What does it mean, how can we relate it to the world of the here and now?

Firstly, we need to remember this is a story, not a factual account, some say two parables welded together. It is disturbing - inflammatory even. Remember many of Jesus' parables originally evoked similar sentiments: in the parable of the Good Samaritan no respectable Jew would not even say the word Samaritan – remember the conversation that followed, *Said Jesus, <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?* <sup>37</sup>*He (the lawyer) said, 'The one who showed him mercy.'* (Luke 10v36-37)

Today we have a story of etiquette and bad manners that escalate into violence, and of an arbitrary decree by the king reminiscent of the royal folly Alice encountered in Wonderland: "Off with their heads!"

If we catch a glimpse of God in this parable, it is in the way the King sends out his messengers again and again. This is reminiscent of God who will not give up on us!

Frequently I hear people say, "I am not good enough for God to love/accept/forgive me!" With the party ready the servants are sent out to the very limits of the territory. (That is what the term "main streets" means in verse 9). They are to bring in everyone, "good and bad" (verse 10), so that the hall will be filled. In a world so willing to throw blame and shame around, let us rejoice in God's generosity.

With the party in full swing, the king enters and moves among the guests. To his dismay, he finds that one of them is not dressed properly. "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe" (verse 12)? And receiving no satisfactory answer, he has the poor chap bound and thrown out - not just outside the hall, but into "the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verse 13). With "friends" like that, who needs enemies?

Again, we find credulity strained to breaking point: of course the guy isn't dressed properly - he was pulled in off the street at the last minute! But again, allegory, and not realism, is calling the shots. Clearly the issue is not the man's clothing, but rather something else about how he presents himself. We are left without a list of specific criteria that move a person from the list of the many "called," to that of the few "chosen" (verse 14).

To my mind it is about attitude, commitment, and lifestyle, - it is not simply enough to say "Yes" to God's banquet invitation, our lives need to be "clothed with Christ". As Paul puts it in Colossians 3 verse 12 "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..."

"Are you a real vicar" I was asked on that train journey. Are we truly wearing the clothing of Christ?

#### Prayer of Response

Generous God,  
your Son Jesus often described your kingdom as a party, we are astonished that you should want to invite us,  
knowing us so well,  
but your love accepts us as we are,  
yet reaches out to transform us  
into the likeness of your Son.  
So challenge and change us  
that our lives may reflect your goodness.  
**Amen.**

HYMN *T Christ be our light*

#### **Longing for light, we wait in darkness.**

Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in our hearts.*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ, be our light!*

*Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

HP, MP, RS, STF706

#### Our Prayers

God of the banquet,  
your desire is that all be welcomed to your table  
to share in the feast,  
yet the reality is that many often are, or feel,  
excluded.

For those excluded through poverty,  
**we pray for fairness.**

*Silence*

For those excluded by their gender,  
**we pray for equality.**

*Silence*

For those excluded because of their sexual  
orientation,

**we pray for acceptance.**

*Silence*

For those excluded because of faith or religion,  
**we pray for understanding.**

*Silence*

For those excluded because of their ethnicity,  
**we pray for justice.**

God of the banquet,  
your desire is that all be welcomed to your table  
to share in the feast –  
guide and encourage us to help make this a reality.  
**Amen.**

#### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN *emphasis on v3 T Abbot's Leigh*

#### **Glorious things of thee are spoken,**

Zion, city of our God;  
he whose word cannot be broken  
formed thee for his own abode;  
on the Rock of Ages founded,

what can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See! the streams of living waters,  
springing from eternal love,  
well supply thy sons and daughters  
and all fear of want remove.  
Who can faint, when such a river  
ever flows their thirst to assuage?  
Grace which, like the Lord, the Giver,  
never fails from age to age.

Saviour, if of Zion's city,  
I through grace a member am,  
let the world deride or pity,  
I will glory in thy Name.  
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,  
all his boasted pomp and show;  
solid joys and lasting treasure  
none but Zion's children know  
HP817, MP173, RS560, STF748

#### Blessing

May God's goodness strengthen you.  
May God's mercy comfort you.  
May God's promise of eternal life inspire you  
with hope and love.  
In the name of the Father, Son and Spirit.  
**Amen.**

#### **The Gospel for Little People**

##### You are invited

Jesus said, 'A man prepared a great feast.

*Mime eating.*

He invited all his friends,

*Point around the room.*

but they were too busy to come.

*Shake head.*

So he went out into the street

*Mime walking.*

and invited everyone he could find

*Hold out hands.*

to come and share his feast.'

*Mime eating.*

*Repeat so everyone can join in.*

#### **Prayer for the Week**

My God, and is thy table spread  
and doth thy cup with love o'er flow?  
Thither be all thy children led,  
and let them all thy sweetness know.  
O let thy table honoured be,  
and furnished well with joyful guest;  
and may each soul salvation see,  
that here its sacred pledges tastes.

*Philip Doddridge*

Rev David Coppard  
Superintendent @ Wiltshire United Area  
Team Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital,  
Taunton

***Our churches may not all be open, but the Church is  
active and alive.***

*This is service is offered to any and all, with love  
and prayers.*

CCL LICENCE  
Steeple Ashton Methodist CCL 291605  
Warminster United CCL 1221052  
Westbury Methodist CCL 781988  
Westbury URC CCL 293641