

Virtual Church 22nd November 2020

Call to worship: Psalm 106 : 1-3

Praise the Lord!

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord or fully declare his praise?
Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right.

<https://youtu.be/gGDOyqFKDeY> Call the seeker (By Newthorpe Baptist Church)

Let us pray:

**We come, O King, to your feast,
invited by your Son, Jesus our Lord.**

**We have brought the worries of our days with us;
we have brought those we love with us, in our hearts,
we have brought the burdens of our wrong-doing,
we have brought our offerings for the feast.**

We are, each one, both sinner and saint.

**We come, O King, to your feast,
invited by your Son, Jesus our Lord.**

We come, O King, but we come reluctantly.

When your word challenged us, we found other things to do.

When your messenger called us, we made excuses.

**We have not sought the loveliness of your life,
the beauty of your love, The joy of your presence.**

We have not followed our highest and best desires.

**We have begrudged the time, the energy, the commitment;
denied you the pleasure of our company;
refused the gift of ourselves.**

**Thank you, Royal God,
that you continue to invite us to your feast,
that you are happy to fill your hall with all manner of people;
for here we find that we can feel at home.**

You love us, and you want us to be here. (Julie Hulme)

Read: Matthew 22: 1-14

<https://youtu.be/idAoS7at3nQ> Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

Message: Are you ready?

"It's not fair!" One of the earliest phrases we say as young children and fairness is something that stays with us as a judgement all our lives.

I don't know about you, but I have always thought that the last part of that reading we heard – that is not fair. How can the King expect people from the streets to be dressed in fine clothes?

And that is not the only part of this Parable of the Wedding Banquet that seems out of place. Why would a King send armies to destroy his own people and burn his own city?

Well first of all verses 1-14 of this chapter in Matthew form not one parable but two! and we can grasp their meaning more easily and more fully if we take them separately.

The events of the first of the two were completely in accordance with normal Jewish customs. When the invitations to a great feast were sent out, the time was not stated – and when everything was ready the servants were sent out with a final summons to tell the guests to come. So the king in this parable had long ago sent out his invitations; but it was not until everything was prepared that the final summons was issued – and insultingly refused.

Like the preceding parables this is another direct accusation at the ruling Jews, God's invited guests. Having been God's chosen people they refused to join the banquet for his Son. As a result other people, including the "bad" as well as good, would be brought in from the highways and byways.

As the writer of the Gospel saw it, the consequences of this refusal were terrible so he inserted an interpretation into verse 7 telling how the king sent his armies to burn the city. Remember Matthew was writing some time between AD 80 and 90 after the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Rome in AD 70. The Temple had been plundered and burned. The city destroyed stone by stone. Complete disaster had come to the nation which did not recognise the Son of God when he came. So Matthew adds that comment to the first of the parables.

There is, of course, the larger interpretation of the parable – that part of the message intended for us. Firstly the invitation to the Christian life is to joy, a party! It is not the gloomy giving up of everything version of life but life in all its

fullness. Secondly it reminds us not to let ordinary things get in the way of our calling. In the parable those invited go off to their estate or business – ordinary things. Do we sometimes let the running of the church get in the way of a life of joy? Do we get weighed down with daily concerns instead of living life for all it is worth?

Now let's come to the second parable –

The king came in to see those who were sitting at table, and there he saw a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. “Friend,” he said to him, “how did you come here with no wedding garment?” The man was struck silent. Then the king said to the attendants: “Bind him hands and feet, and throw him out into the outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth there. For many are called but few are chosen.”

Jesus is once again using a story which was already familiar to his hearers. The Rabbis of the time had two stories involving kings and garments. The first told of a king who invited his guests to a feast, without telling them the exact date and time; but he did tell them they must wash, anoint and clothe themselves that they might be ready when the summons came. The wise prepared themselves at once and took their places waiting at the palace door for they believed that a palace feast could be prepared quickly. The foolish thought they would have plenty of time so they went to work... Suddenly the summons came without any warning, the wise went in to rejoice with the king while the foolish who had not prepared in their finery, had to stand outside sad and hungry.

The second Rabbinic parable told of a king who gave his servants fine clothes, royal robes. Those who were wise took the robes and carefully stored them away in all their pristine loveliness. Those who were foolish wore the robes to work where everyone could see them. But they became soiled and stained. The day came when the king demanded the robes back. The wise handed them back fresh and clean; so the king laid up the robes in his treasury and told them to go in peace. The foolish handed them back stained. The king commanded that these robes be taken away and cleaned and the foolish servants cast in prison.

So Jesus is telling a new story with old links. Not only are we to be prepared for what God is calling us to do, we must also take care of our souls which will have to be accounted for before God.

Everyone is invited – the stranger, the outsider, the mis-fit, gentiles and Jews but all must respond by living in a new way. We cannot carry on as if God's call does not matter to our lives.

This is not about outward show – clothes don't matter but our spirit does. We show respect by the way we dress for certain things. It is the respect that matters not the dress. We come prepared and full of expectation about what God is going to do in our lives. Preparation of our hearts and minds – for worship and for each new day. Amen

Prayers for others – lift up to God anyone who is especially on your mind or heart today.

<https://youtu.be/WL-UdwB0Qvc> Hear the call of the kingdom

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen**