



Thursday 20th August Holy Communion

Welcome

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Prayer of Preparation

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

Prayers of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,

**forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.

Collect

Let your merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please you; 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**

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 51:7-12

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:1-14

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew
Glory to you, O Lord

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

“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 butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Rosemary Feuell

The world’s most scorned wedding invite? Best excuses for not turning up at parties? I couldn’t answer these questions, but I did discover only 17% of wedding guests normally decline invitations.. so when Jesus describes a wedding most people refused, we must ask what is meant.

You very likely meet today’s Gospel with greater experience, as I haven’t had or hosted weddings, though we had a happy one for my sister 48 years ago, and I attended gorgeous ones for friends and godchildren. How many weddings did Jesus attend on earth? He mentions them often. How did He feel where He was close to wedding party members? It has been suggested His first miracle at Cana might have been painful to Him: a wedding with family connections, where He possibly had to release contemporaries who could, if He had had another destiny, have become His intimates; we might consider Him relinquishing intimacy at such occasions to follow His lonely pathway into ministry, seeing folk receive happiness not granted



Him. He was certainly aware of feelings invested in weddings, freely turning water into wine to prolong everyone's joy. Tempted in all points like us, we read, but jealousy did not possess Him.

Jesus received questions around marriage and divorce, understanding the heart issues behind them *and unlawful* passion. He recognised marriage as temporary, earthly, since He reminded contentious Sadducees that marriage-making would not characterise resurrection life: a relief to any disappointed in marriage! Jesus offers various sayings and parables about bridegroom and bride, wedding hosts, and those who let these people down, notably the ladies forgetful of their oil, missing the ceremonies; and those rejecting invitations or wedding etiquette. He memorably shows the unique privileges of hosting and participating in wedding feasts – but far less about the couple's romantic rejoicing. Today the Bride is not mentioned. Let's consider.

Matthew's parable focuses on "mine host", holding the feast for his son, and how things may miscarry. It doesn't promise, warn, or picture the kingdom of heaven. It's more an allegory, where most details have real-world equivalents: king and host representing God, and son (telling the story!); slaves suggesting prophets and evangelists; the first reluctant guest cohort are the chosen Jews; the city's destruction possibly pre-figures Jerusalem's later fall. The second guest cohort could be the Gentiles, keener to accept Jesus than His own people.

Typical human behaviour is portrayed in challenging detail – and there is something unspoken: pain and disappointment in the offended host, his gestures cruelly rebuffed. Yes, anger came, but his generosity wells up, with persistent yearnings to draw people by kindness (and his messengers), regardless of merit or status - so long as rejoicing fills the venue. The second wave of invitations succeeds, feasting proceeds.. but the host suddenly shows another angle: someone disgraced, excluded for lacking appropriate clothing. Is this arbitrary? Rushing in doesn't seem the problem - he had disregarded obvious expectations about presentation. It becomes a final reckoning, a Last Judgement perhaps, with the unfortunate reaching outer darkness, beyond apology or forgiveness. Why? The verdict is apparently that you accept God the King's (straightforward) terms, as well as His welcome. Otherwise you are just "called" or "invited", but not really blended into the magnificent festival. Imagine checking into Buckingham Palace bikini-clad, or at Stansted without ID and ticket, brandishing your hand grenade, as if you wouldn't travel, or mocked security.

What appears repeatedly in Jesus' critical stories is our blatant refusal of joy – I mean, the life-changing, life-long joy of intimacy with God and Christ. Elsewhere Jesus complained crowds avoided rejoicing with Him - the Bridegroom – and similarly side-stepped John the Baptist's sober call:

We piped to you and you did not dance.. we wailed to you and you did not mourn." (*Matt 11: 17*)

So the king is desolate, observing this stubbornness, just as He wept over Jerusalem and its refusals:

"Jerusalem, ...that kills the prophets and stones those sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together... and you would not." (*Luke 13: 34*)

Jesus is this kind of God, this festival-giver, wounded to exasperation by all that keeps His guests from intimacy with Him. And what of His Son's Bride?

Yes, we have excuses, as suggested, for missing the feast: they reflect our *reasons* for keeping Him at arms' length: first, generally "not wanting to come", then not valuing the gift, for they "made light" of the invitation; next, the person-specific excuses: concerns, work, commitments; and our

getting furious with being invited. We don't kill postmen - but we deface unwelcome post or shelve inconvenient demands, regardless of how this undermines another's event or family well-being, picking and choosing as we wish: "No, can't do Saturdays"; "4pm's too late for wedding breakfasts"; "nothing to wear"; "too busy at home". We are happy to abuse the messenger, criticising the cousins who sent out invites, not attending because X will be there, our enemy from school. All these, if just proud excuses, prevent us from prioritising the wedding couple's joy over our own, celebrating new life-arrangements, and sharing these life-changing moments. We can slight others by not taking overtures or invites seriously when they set great store by them and seek our blessing. We may create double offence by declining a lovingly given opportunity *and* hurting someone questioning our selfish reasoning. If these stances mirror our trifling with what Jesus offers us, then pain is clear, His and ours.

Jesus depicts a king desiring to be ever more inclusive, forgetting original ingratitude in order to invite others less worthy, but readier for his hospitality. He doesn't talk much about the royal feelings - but we might just sense tears: an ancient prayer asks God to hide us from His tears, presumably over our shortcomings. Today's Psalm (51) asks God to hide His face from our sins and restore to us the *joy* of His salvation. This parable shows the Lord's greatest grief about our lukewarm reluctance to share His intimacy is that, preferring our own mundane routines, we refuse His lavish, glad joy in having us beside Him. Jesus' final prayer for His disciples runs: "Father, I desire that those also.. *may be with me where I am..*" (John 17: 28).



We cannot and don't need to deserve His invitation; we *do need* to let God draw us into His love, not just toss His invitation around. If we ever held an unappreciated party, and people showed unloving attitudes to invitations or misbehaved, we might consider the misery of the Most High on experiencing such rejection, and let our love grow. Together we are the Bride for the Bridegroom-Son, blessed by the loving Father-Host.

Let us pray: Draw us into Your Friendship, Lord, today and always. **Amen**

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,**

of all that is,
seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

Prayers

The Peace

The peace of the Lord always be with you
And also with you.
Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you
and also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, we give you thanks and praise through your beloved Son Jesus Christ, your living Word, through whom you have created all things; who was sent by you in your great goodness to be our Saviour. By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh; as your Son, born of the blessed Virgin, he lived on earth and went about among us; he opened wide his arms for us on the cross; he put an end to death by dying for us; and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life; so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed, the source of all holiness; grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit, and according to your holy will, these gifts of bread and wine may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying:

Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

And so, Father, calling to mind his death on the cross, his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world; rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming in glory, we celebrate this memorial of our redemption. As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we bring before you this bread and this cup and we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people and gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, in the company of all the saints, may praise and glorify you for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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 for ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you. Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen

Prayer after Communion

God of our pilgrimage, you have willed that the gate of mercy should stand open for those who trust in you: look upon us with your favour that we who follow the path of your will may never wander from the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

If you have any prayer or pastoral needs, please don't hesitate to contact
Revd Petra Shakeshaft (07847 307416)
Sally Bard (01223 501165)