

Worship at Home service Sunday 15th October 2023 with Deacon Richard Beckett

Call to worship:

Lord, your goodness and love have surrounded us all the days of our lives. We gather at your invitation, to rejoice in you, to bring our concerns to you, and to know your peace.

Lord, it seems almost irreverent to celebrate when so much suffering and conflict exists but your invitation to the Kingdom stands forever. Amen

StF 44 Come on and Celebrate

[\(9\) Come On and Celebrate \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Come on and celebrate

His gift of love, we will celebrate,
the Son of God who loved us
And gave us life.

We'll shout your praise Oh King,
You give us joy nothing else can bring,
We'll give to you our offering -
In celebration praise.

*Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
celebrate and sing,*

Celebrate and sing to the King. (Repeat)

We approach God:

All knowing God, if we have come to you today clothed in despondency, **bless us with hope.**

If we have come clothed in anxiety, **bless us with peace.**

If we have come clothed in half-heartedness, **bless us with desire.**

If we have come clothed in resentment, **bless us with grace.**

If we have come clothed in distractedness, **bless us with focus.**

If we have come clothed in failure, **bless us with confidence.**

If we have come clothed in complacency, **bless us with urgency,** that we may worship you with the best of all we have and are –in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

(Adapted from Roots Resources)

Bible reading

Matthew 22:1-15

Time to reflect:

It's always very easy I think when we hear a parable like this to immediately equate the King with God but Jesus in his introduction is

quite clear that this story is about the Kingdom of God.

A generous King gives a marriage feast for his son. A feast not a funeral.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a place of joy, gladness and celebration.

Maybe there is a message here for those who put on their serious face when church is mentioned, (Along with their serious clothes?) But we are not talking about Church, we are talking about the Kingdom of God – surely, they are the same thing aren't they?

The way the parable reads is that invitations have already gone out for the wedding but now (In the eastern tradition) the servants are sent out to tell those who have been invited that the moment has arrived, all is ready and they should be attending.

Apparently though it was not unusual for an invitation for an event to be issued without specifying the exact time until later.

But just imagine - someone turning up on your doorstep to tell you that the event is about to happen and you should be there!!

You cannot ignore that can you!

But this is not just an invitation to a party. This is an invitation to be part of something life changing and earth shatteringly different to anything you have ever known before. A banquet overflowing. to which ALL are invited (And I mean all!) as the story depicts.

It is very likely that Jesus was aiming his parable at the religious leaders of the day when he talks about those who were invited but did not come. Their standing in the Kingdom was negligible. They have known about the invitation but have turned it down – often with great violent force and active resistance.

We too can resist and oppose God's invitation and do so again and again.

All God demands from us is a simple 'yes'. But time and again we find excuses to not fully accept God's invitation.

The wedding feast goes ahead anyway: the Heavenly banquet does not stop because those who chose not to come stayed away; there is always room for more and in this case, as the whole of Jesus' ministry and

interaction with people demonstrates, everyone is invited – and they come. It would be a bit much to expect those people who were brought in off the streets to be kitted out in suitable clothing ready for a wedding feast. However, it was often the tradition that the host would also provide beautiful festal robes for all to wear as they arrived. In this way, the poor need not be ashamed of the clothes they came in, and the rich had no right to be proud of their fine gowns. So, when a man is spotted who had obviously refused to accept the gift of robes, he might naturally be questioned.

This second part of the parable teaches that there is a sort of 'dress code' for you when you live your life in the way which aims to fit with the sort of Love which God gives to you. It is a 'dress code', which is nothing to do with wearing the right clothes to church! It is nothing to do with singing the right hymns in church or saying the right words.

It is a spiritual dress code which has everything to do with our preparation for coming into God's presence wherever we prepare to meet Him. We hope of course that will be in worship on a Sunday, but it could also be within our own times of quiet prayer during the week, or as we walk out in the countryside or as we carry out our daily work or leisure.

When we come into God's presence the focus is no longer on us – it is on God. And in the presence of God – the creator and ruler of the universe, our spiritual clothing can only be that of thankfulness. In the presence of God – through the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, our Spiritual clothing can only be that of repentance. In the presence of God – the Holy Spirit who brings new power and strength and inspiration, our Spiritual clothing can only be that of acceptance and humility.

A prayer of intercession: (Including a prayer from the President and Vice-President of Conference)
God of peace and compassion,
We pray for all impacted by the escalation in conflict in Israel-Palestine. For all who are mourning.
For all who are fearful, today, and for what

may lie ahead. For all traumatised and re-traumatised by what they have experienced. Enable us to stand in solidarity with people of peace. May your Spirit bring peace and healing to your troubled world. Amen.
We pray for all people who feel they are in any way excluded. Lord, help us to be creative about the invitations we offer and the hospitality we demonstrate so that no one need feel they are beyond the realm of your love. Amen

StF 248 I heard the voice of Jesus say

[\(9\) I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say - YouTube](#)

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
and He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in Him my Star, my Sun;
and in that Light of life I'll walk,
till trav'ling days are done.

Closing Prayer

Go into the week ahead, and wherever you find yourself, celebrating or sharing a sadness, or anything in between, may you rejoice in God's grace. See each moment as an invitation to meet with God, each meeting as an opportunity to invite others. Until we meet again. Amen. (From Roots Resources)

(If you are able to access it, a challenging song which fits with the theme for today is 'Come all you vagabonds' by Stuart Townend)
[Come All Ye Vagabonds - YouTube](#)