

St Columba's Church - Virtual Service - 11 October 2020

Welcome

All that glitters,
all that tempts,
the latest fad,
the lure of fame,
the promise of wealth,
the idols of many forms and names; we lay them aside now
as we come to worship the one God, the true light of life,
and bringer of love.

Hymn: Love Divine all Loves Excelling

Prayer (Prayers come from Church of Scotland: Weekly Worship)

Loving Lord, Jesus,
we come into Your presence to worship and praise You. We come from different places,
different families
and different circumstances.
However we have come here today –
whether the last week has been good or bad, whether we have known joy or sorrow,
let us leave our cares and concerns aside
and come united in our faith and hopes for the future.
We bring our skills and our talents which You have given us, and we promise to use them
to help others
and to reach out in love
showing others what it means to be a child of God.
Help us not just to listen to Your voice but to obey.
Help us not just to talk, but to put our words in to action, so that all we do is done in Your
name
Amen

Confession

Gracious and merciful God,
we are sorry that we seldom live up to Your expectations. We are sorry that our promise to
follow Your example and to share Your never-ending love
are too often promises made in vain.
So, forgive us, Lord.
We are ashamed that we fail You so often.
We are ashamed that we do not always follow in Your footsteps. We ask You to guide us
and set us on the right path.
When we are weak, make us strong.

When we are discouraged, encourage us.
When we take for granted all You have given us
and do not share what we have with those who live in poverty, forgive us, Lord.

Remind us that everything we have comes from You
and everything we do is done for the work
and the glory of Your kingdom.

And hear us now as we pray:
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 debtors,
as we forgive our debtors.
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.

Bible readings

Exodus 32: 1 - 14

The Golden Calf

32 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods[a] who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." **3** So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. **4** He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods,[b] Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord." **6** So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

7 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. **8** They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

9 "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. **10** Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

11 But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. 13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" 14 Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Matthew 22: 1 -14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 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 butchered, 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, mistreated 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 So 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, the bad as well as the good, 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 He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' 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."

Hymn: God is so good (<https://youtu.be/7IIZIPtQuW8>)

Reflection

Matthew Chapter Twenty Two, Verses one to fourteen. The Parable of the Wedding Banquet:

Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. And here is that Parable:

There once lived a king. This king had a lot. I mean a lot. Big houses, Houses for different seasons. Fancy transport. He had a retinue of staff. People to clean and to cook, people to organise And people to protect. And this King was connected. Boy, was he connected. The most important families. He knew the lot.

And now his son's wedding was coming up. This was going to be perfect. The best wedding ever. Picture it: There would be a huge floor-boarded marquee on the main lawn south-facing. There was a natural amphitheatre near the orchard which would be perfect for the ceremony. Later on, into the drawing room for dinner. Carriages at eleven, And I do mean carriages.

And so he ordered his staff to send out the invites. The best-looking invites you had seen. hand-cut envelopes, Scented invites, Tassels. The thick two-ply RSVP cards inside were shaped like the King's distinctive palace, Giving a tantalizing feel for the what was to come for all those had been called.

And many were called. It would be the most influential, exclusive Hello magazine gathering of people ever. Titans of industry, Media stars, Church of Scotland ministers, leading Politicians. The lot. What a high-profile gathering.

The King was excited waiting for the RSVP cards to return. Perhaps some people would reply the same day, But nothing came. Next day for sure, But nothing. Nothing the next day either. In fact, no one replied to say they were coming. Not a single reply.

What a moment for the King. He knew many people, of course he did he was the ruler, but friends? Well now he was finding out. Well he did not have friends of common interests. Equal interests, constancy, carefulness, candour and counsel. Not friends like that.

This really hurt. I have done so much with and for these people but when the chance comes to show that they are friends. They do not come.

But would the King learn? No. He still focused on the most influential people to come. He got his staff again to contact the people but, poor King, This time he did not emphasise the friendships but simply what he could offer. "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."

But the people invited made light of it and went away, one to their farm, another to their business. But it was even worse than that, while the rest mistreated the staff, maltreated them.

The King was shaken, Ok, they are not my friends, But I don't even command respect

Do they know who I am? And he shows them what he can do. Again the King had a chance to change but no. He gives in to his anger and sets out to destroy those he actually wanted to be his friends. Again, the King has a chance to learn but no. What a sad world. People need help seeing what really matter.

Then he said to his staff, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

Go therefore into the streets, and invite anyone you find to the wedding banquet.”
Anyone? Anyone, says the King bereft of people who even like him.

Employees went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found,
both good and bad; so the wedding hall is filled with guests. They had not been given a
choice but had to come.

But would the King learn? No. ‘For when the king came in to see the guests,
he noticed a man there who was not wearing decent wedding clothes,
and he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here dressed like that?”
And the man was speechless. 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.” For many are called, but few are chosen.’

Matthew 22 Verses 14 - 22. The Parable of the Wedding Feast. 2,000 years ago, God sent his
Son Jesus Christ to bring people into the Kingdom of Heaven. God sent his Son for the
powerful, Those who thought that they had the lot. God sent his son for those who think
they have what they need but are still not happy. God sent his Son for the friendless, The
forgotten, The angry, The violent, The good, The bad. He came for us all.

He stood up to the ways of the world. The one who could turn water into wedding wine.
He made his home amongst the forgotten.

We did not learn, But on behalf of all of us he was thrown into the outer darkness where
there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. But he did that for all us.

He did all that so that we could be called. Called back to what really matters. It’s called the
Kingdom of God. And many are called, few are chosen. Amen.

Hymn: Turn your eyes upon Jesus (<https://youtu.be/j5qc0EcNgqw>)

Prayer for Others

Holy God,
who gave Your Law to Moses,
and who personified Your Law of Love
in Jesus your Son,
as Jesus reached out to those on the margins, so now in our prayers we do likewise:
We pray for all who have little love in their lives – those who are lonely and afraid,
those who are addicted and trapped,
those who grieve and mourn,
those whose relationships
have shattered into a thousand shards; God of love,
help us to hold them close.
We pray for those who love the wrong things –
those for whom money or possessions are “god”

and where greed has taken over,
those who love only for gaining the approval of others, flattery, or power, those who can
only love self
and where bitterness or hurt has made them inward-looking;
God of love,
help us to unlock their hearts.
We pray for those who love to such an extent
as to give totally of self –
those who are persecuted for truth
or oppressed because they take a stand for justice, those who face discrimination
because of skin colour, gender sexuality or class, those who strive tirelessly for the Good
News of Jesus often facing hostility or apathy from others;
God of love,
help us to work in solidarity with them.

[A moment of silence to bring personal prayers to God...]

God of Love,
hear our prayers spoken and unspoken, and receive them in Your grace and mercy,
through Jesus, our loving Saviour;
Amen

Hymn: How great Thou art (<https://youtu.be/urI-ZJfUHdM>)

Blessing

May we be blessed with the restoration of Your kingdom
May we all have a part to play in that joyous task
May we see you in the work of restoration
and in our discovery of the Cornerstone that is Christ – yesterday, today and forever.
Amen