

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Trinity 18

This service can be accessed via the telephone on 01308 293062

*At the beginning of our services in church today we will light a candle,  
you may wish to light a candle at home too.*

**Welcome and Opening Scriptures**

Praise the Lord!

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord,  
or declare all his praise?

Happy are those who observe justice,  
who do righteousness at all times. Psalm 106 1-4

**Confession**

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

**Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.**

**We are not worthy to be called your children.**

**We turn to you again.**

**Have mercy on us, bring us back to yourself**

**As those who once were dead**

**But now have life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Absolution**

May the God of love bring us back to himself,

Forgive us our sins

And assure us of his eternal love

In Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**The Collect (special prayer for today)**

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us your gift of faith that, forsaking what lies behind

and reaching out to that which is before, we may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of everlasting joy; 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

**First Reading: Philippians 4.1-4**

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

## **Gospel Reading: Matthew 22.1-14**

Once more 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. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 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." But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; and so 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 a wedding robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he 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.'

### **Reflection**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

The parable which Jesus tells about the wedding banquet must surely feature rejoicing and celebration with God which happens even in the face of violent opposition and rejection. And all of us can count ourselves among the guests who have accepted that invitation once it is thrown open to those walking in any direction and with good or bad past life. I believe we are talking about quite a celebration, stretched over all time and space, heaven and earth. We can afford to savour that celebration rather than rushing on immediately to the next section of the story.

Looking back over our lives as Christians, what difference has it made having God in it with us, having that ultimate assurance of his will for our lives. Rejoicing is a result of trusting God to be the shelter in the storm and knowing that we will not come to ultimate harm, so that we have ultimately, nothing to fear.

Back to the wedding, to the guest in his old clothes, in fact. This has made me think of the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse which has been publicly reported this week. I expect you will have seen it on the news or read about it in the newspaper. The absolute failure of some very senior clergy in the Church of England, to respond to allegations of abuse and protect the vulnerable. It's been appalling. The actions of perpetrators and any who "aided" (knowingly or negligently) them to get away with it, is abhorrent and those individuals still living need to be held fully accountable and subject to justice and the law of the land, no exception.

There is no excuse. Neither will any apology ever be good enough.

Individuals and the system have failed and caused irreparable hurt ... that's a huge understatement but I can't find any other way of putting it.

You may think I shouldn't be criticising the Church of England in this way, on the contrary ... I believe in, work and hope for, being a vicar who tries to be a presence of hope and love and justice and healing in my community. Of raising my voice with those who struggle to be heard. Feeding the hungry (literally and spiritually). Binding up the broken-hearted. Setting free the oppressed (including those who the institution fails). I know many of my amazing colleagues share this view. That's what Jesus calls his followers to do at grass roots level. Keep it simple - act with love.

That's the Church that I (and others) believe in, and why I am here, doing what I do - I want to play my small part in making it what it could, and should be, now and for the future.

At that wedding, proper wedding garments would have been provided free of charge, so there is deliberate insult in the guest who has decided not to wear his, but chooses to remain in the filthy rags of his old life. Jesus wants his hearers to be under no illusion; accepting the honour of a place at the banquet obliges us also to accept the grace of being renewed and transformed. Living with our former outlook, attitudes and behaviour is not on. It places us alongside those who have chosen not to accept God's invitation.

Accepting God's invitation to the banquet assures us of much rejoicing and ... expects us to play our part too. **Amen.**

Let us affirm our faith in God in the words of the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
And born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, died and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again,  
He ascended into heaven,  
And is seated at the right hand of God the Father.  
He will come again to judge both the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
The holy catholic church,  
The communion of saints,  
The forgiveness of sins,  
The resurrection of the body  
And the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Generous God, we thank you for the gift of faith by which we are called to love and serve you and one another. We give thanks for the life of this benefice and for the witness of those who have worshipped before us in this church. We ask for your blessing on us now as we look to the future with hope.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Wise God, bless and guide Elizabeth, our Queen; give wisdom to all in authority and direct this and every nation in the ways of protection from harm, justice and peace, that we may honour one another and look for the common good. Help our continent not to renege on it's past, but to value its heritage as a springboard to an ever more just, peaceful and compassionate future.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the Church, we give thanks that across the country churches stand as great beacons, reminding people of your presence in their midst. There are church towers punching the sky and church spires piercing the horizon. Churches give soul to every community, and without them there's a vacuum in the centre of community life. Enable us to keep our churches open and available, flexible and forward-looking; sacraments of your love as outward and visible signs of your inward, invisible grace. We pray for all those who have been given responsibility for the ordering of our parish life and we give thanks for the ministry of our churchwardens and PCC members

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Living God, we pray for the people we are called to serve and we bring before you the needs of this church. We pray for the leaders of our community that they may act with integrity and be given the spirit of wisdom and compassion so that your kingdom may come in ways which enrich our common life. We ask for your blessing on our homes, on all those who live and work here.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God, we pray for all who need your healing touch today, those suffering the effects of physical or mental ill health and also loneliness and isolation. Especially we pray for recovery from the effects of Covid19, for the swift and safe development of a vaccine and a cure, not forgetting all those who have lost their lives to this deadly disease. We remember with deep gratitude those who have left their mark on our lives by giving us love and laughter, but have now gone before us to be with Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Redeeming God, you offer freedom to all people. We pray for those in prison. Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist. Support with your love prisoners and their families and friends, prison staff and all who care. Heal those who have been wounded by the actions of others, especially the victims of crime. Help us to forgive one another, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly together with Christ in his strength and in his Spirit, now and every day.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Tender God, as we step out afresh to live your love and serve Jesus in the world, we ask that your guiding hand would hold us fast and lead us confidently through all life has to offer. Bless us as we seek to make new disciples. Inspire us as we worship and ponder your word, so that we might go deeper into God. Encourage us so that our lives might transform this community.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Let us now pray the Lord's Prayer together

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, forever and ever.  
Amen.**

Dismissal

**Living God,  
Draw us deeper into your love;  
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;  
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.  
Stir us, strengthen us,  
Teach and inspire us to live your love  
With generosity and joy,  
Imagination and courage;  
For the sake of your world  
And in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

The service ends with the Peace

**Peace to you from God our Father who hears our cry.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ whose death brings healing.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit who gives us life and strength.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you. Amen**

Sources: Patterns for Worship, John Goldingay, Tom Wright, John Pritchard and Common Worship.