

twelvebaskets

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ORDINARY 28A

15th October 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Take time to find something in your home that you hold as precious and important. It may be a photograph, a flower or personal item.

Whatever you choose consider:

- What is it that makes it important to you?
- What memories does it hold?
- How do you feel about it and what would happen if you lost it?

Now imagine that God is holding you as precious and important:

- Loving and caring for you and your unique character
- Following your journey of faith
- Wanting never to lose you

When you feel able put down your object and pick up again these written words:

Come then to worship, knowing that whatever you offer in this moment is precious and important,

Amen.

You may now wish to say a version or translation of the Lord's Prayer with which you are familiar

Reading: Matthew 22:1-14 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding through singing

As you think through how this reading might be speaking to you today, you might like to listen to or sing along with one or more of these songs:

277 STF – My song is love unknown - [YouTube](#)

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day - [YouTube](#)

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven - [YouTube](#)

Responding to the reading

Who is welcome at your table? Literally, or metaphorically...

Spend a moment in quiet thinking about that.

Do you have boundaries in place, which might be healthy and important for your own mental health and for the wellbeing of others in your care? Or do you build walls and barriers that keep people out because of prejudice?

The King in Jesus's story, retold by Matthew, responds to the attack on his messengers by sending out his servants again, this time inviting anyone they find to come and share at the feast. After, that is, he orders the murder and destruction of the cities that had visited violence on his messengers! It's a brutal story full of pride and social stigma and violence...

Jesus's story though, is about far more than just a wedding and its guests. It's a parable that explains to us the concept of universalism. Jesus is explaining to those listening that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, not just a select group. The first group of invited guests are supposed to represent the Jewish people, those who thought of themselves as God's people. The way the parable unfolds would have made it clear to those listening that simply being invited is not enough. Their attendance at the feast required them to respond and actually turn up!

Those in the story who do chose to attend the feast are supposed to represent the Gentiles. The Gentiles were those who weren't Jewish and who didn't follow God so to suggest they would be gladly invited to the feast, and infer that invitation to the Kingdom of God, was a radical readjustment of Jewish theology. And wouldn't it be lovely if we could just leave things there?

However, the parable doesn't end on that happy note of all being invited. Once everyone is happily tucking into the fattened cattle the King notices that one of the guests isn't dressed appropriately and deals with him by tying him up and chucking him out the door. Now, as I'm still considered fairly young in most of my churches and have a rocker/biker kind of aesthetic I tend to think most people in our churches are inappropriately dressed, and I'm absolutely sure the feeling is mutual! It's a good job then that we're dealing with a parable here and that it's meaning has absolutely nothing to do with the way that we dress but is all to do with how prepared and committed we are. The man who is ejected wasn't prepared to commit himself fully to the feast.

While this parable clearly says that everyone can come to God's kingdom, Jesus is expecting us to respond with a commitment.

Some questions to consider, and perhaps for you to share with a neighbour or friend this week.

- Do we sometimes think Jesus is only for people who go to church, or call themselves Christian?
- Can you think of any examples where we might exclude people from worship, or from our homes?
- What does radical inclusion look like for you? How can you ensure people experience you as a welcoming space?
- How can you re-affirm our commitment to Jesus in the coming days and weeks?

Responding through prayer

Heavenly Father, today I thank you for our invitation to the feast of your kingdom. As I sit at your table, help me to recognise that – because of your grace – I am worthy to be in your presence.

This day, help me to commit to you once more.

God of radical welcomes and inclusive grace, help me to see where I need boundaries to keep me safe, and where I need to remove barriers that exclude others.

Come to my table, Lord, and help me invite others too,
In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

Blessing

May you find strength in Parental presence, comfort in the promises of Jesus, and courage that flows from the Holy Spirit to face the challenges of each new day. May you walk in faith, knowing that God is with you in every step you take.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 16th October

- God of all blessings,
Thank you for the gift of food to eat,
For the flavours and the smells,
The energy and enjoyment I can get from the food I eat.
- I'm sorry for all the times I've taken for granted the food on my plate, the ingredients in my fridge, the ready meals in my freezer.
And for all the other blessings I have received that I often overlook or forget to be thankful for.
Thank you Lord, for you are good to me.

Amen.

Tuesday 17th October

- Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still for the presence of the Lord is in this place.
Find spaces for stillness today. Be still, with no objective or intention, other than stillness, which is an end in itself.

Wednesday 18th October

- Gracious God, I know you have plans for me- plans for me to be a part of your kingdom and an agent of love in the world.
- Today, show me how to respond to the invitations I might receive. Help me to be open to the opportunities to share your love.
- In Jesus' name I pray,
Amen.

Thursday 19th October

- The German theologian Meister Eckhart once said, 'if the only prayer you ever say in your life is "thank you", that will be enough'.
- Today, throughout the day (or whatever is left of the day), simply look for opportunities to pray the words 'thank you' to God.
- Thank you for the sunrise. Thank you for that I have enough food for the day. Thank you for my health, such as it is. Thank you for that lovely conversation with a friend. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Amen.

Friday 20th October

- If you can, go on a prayer walk. Or ask someone to help you make a journey around your neighbourhood – just the few houses near you would be fine, or go on a longer trip if you'd like to take in a whole estate or community.
- As you travel past each house, pray for the people who live there – just in your mind, or under your breath. Hold their situations, whether you know them or not, in your heart.

Saturday 21st October

- Loving God, send your Spirit.
- For all those who are on the margins, who are told that they are not welcome, I pray that they might know that your love is for all.
- I pray that you show me how to be to be part of the solution where suffering is the problem.
Loving God, send your Spirit. Amen.