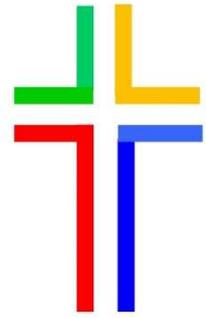


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 11 October



In spite of the dreadful weather our drive-in Harvest Festival at the Parish Hall car park was a great success. We were able (after a bit of fiddling in some cases) to tune in our car radios to the required frequency and listen to the service in our own cars. We were able to sing the traditional harvest hymns, and it was good to be able to sing together in fellowship, even if we were in separate cars. Sophie led us with prayers and a relevant and uplifting message. We will have to explore how we might do something similar again.

## PRAYER

Lord, we know what we have to do to be good Christians, to live our lives as you taught us, to fully respond to the invitation of Jesus to follow him. And yet, like the people invited to the banquet in the parable, we make excuses, other things get in the way, and we give

ourselves different priorities. We do things that you would not want us to do and we do not do things that we know we should be doing. Help us, Lord, we pray, to answer your invitation to be your disciples and not to make lame excuses. **Amen**

**READING FOR TODAY** Matthew 22:1-14 (NIV)

### The parable of the wedding banquet

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

<sup>4</sup>‘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 slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.”

<sup>5</sup>‘But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. <sup>6</sup>The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup>‘Then he said to his servants, “The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. <sup>9</sup>So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.” <sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>‘But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. <sup>12</sup>He asked, “How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?” The man was speechless.

<sup>13</sup>‘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.”

<sup>14</sup>‘For many are invited, but few are chosen.’

## REFLECTION

In Matthew’s Gospel this is the third parable that Jesus told to the Pharisees after they had questioned his authority. Each of the parables was warning the Pharisees that they had had their chance and had blown it. They had said

fine words but hadn’t actually lived the life that God intended and that others would be welcomed into the Kingdom instead – the sinners, and the poor, and the tax collectors. By this third parable the Pharisees must have

been getting heartily fed up with Jesus and his stories.

Jesus likened the invitation into the Kingdom to a King giving a wedding banquet. All the people he had originally invited, perhaps the family and close friends who would expect to be invited, all made lame excuses and said they had other things to do. The Pharisees were in that position - they were religious leaders after all – they would expect to be favoured guests to the Kingdom. But Jesus was pointing out that they hadn't actually done the things they were required to do, it was all show, and they had other priorities, and didn't come when invited. Well, said Jesus, the Kingdom is like that and so everybody the Pharisees looked down on will be invited instead.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

We thank you, Lord, for your invitation and that we are able to join in fellowship in reading this service sheet. May we in turn pass your invitation on to others so that they will also come to know you.

We pray for all those who have never heard of your invitation, all those who have heard but chose to ignore it, and all those who said yes but then decided to go their own way and do something else.

We pray for your followers across the world, those who have responded to your invitation, those who have got themselves prepared, and those who seeking to become ever better disciples of Jesus.

Amen.

### **HYMN H&P 139, StF 255**

The kingdom of God is justice and joy;  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy.  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace;

This parable also occurs in Luke's Gospel and the core message is the same. But Matthew has this curious extra section about the man who was not wearing the right clothes. I have always had sympathy with this man, after all he had just been invited in off the street. I am not a great one for constantly changing my clothes (my wife will tell you this; I got told off once for creosoting the fence in a new shirt), so perhaps he felt the same. But what Jesus was saying was that the Kingdom demands certain standards, you can't enter casually, you have to take it seriously, and get yourself prepared.

Nobody said being a Christian was easy or simple. So there's something to think about this week – have we got ourselves prepared?

the captives are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share;  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice:  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to his cross:  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal;  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call  
and all things cry 'Glory!'  
to God all in all.

### **BLESSING**

The LORD bless you and keep you.  
The LORD make his face to shine on you,  
and be gracious to you;  
The LORD turn his face toward you,  
and give you peace. Amen.