



Our Gospel this morning is another of Jesus' parables, another occasion when it feels like he is talking to us in riddles. A story he tells, leaving it for us to work out his meaning and in turn leaving us to our own interpretation. As you all know, I like a simple explanation with a meaning relevant to our lives today. Is this really a king calling guests to his banquet or is this God calling to all society today? Twice the king sent his workforce to bring in the guests but they were too indifferent, too disrespectful or just too busy with their own lives to come. Many were called but no one came. That has so many parallelisms to people's attitude to the church today.

The king still does not give up on his banquet just as God never gives up on us. Even more are called, this time the good and the bad, is this a reminder that everyone is welcome to God's table.

Then there is the king's 'friend'. I remember hearing this story as a child in Sunday school. I guess like me, you were all sent to church in your Sunday best, this story seemed to give me the reason why I had to go in my best clothes, if I was not dressed for the occasion I would be 'ousted' too like the king's friend. As an adult I see it very differently. When we attend a great celebration or an occasion like a wedding, choosing our clothing is part of making the right preparations for 'the day', now I see the king's anger at his not so friendly friend, he had made no effort, not even in the simplest task of choosing his clothing in his preparations for this grand occasion. Is Jesus telling us to live our lives in preparation for

the day when we are eventually called to attend Gods great feast in His kingdom in heaven.

Jesus can tell a good story and the people of his day appear no different to those of today, the listeners like to hear it told with a hint of drama, a bit of violence, the odd murder and a little torture thrown in to add impact, but, underneath it all the message appears quite simple, God calls everyone of us but will our preparations make us a chosen one.

### Collect for the day

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 forever. Amen

### A reading from the book of Isaiah

O LORD, you are my God;

I will exalt you, I will praise your name;  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

<sup>2</sup> For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of aliens is a city no more,  
it will never be rebuilt.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

<sup>4</sup> For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.

When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,  
<sup>5</sup> the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

<sup>7</sup> And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.



### A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



<sup>8</sup> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

### A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> 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.’ <sup>5</sup> But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup> Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so 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 a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup> and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> 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.’ <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.”

### Words from Fr Rodney

St. Paul's to the Philippians my favourite one of all his letters. He obviously had a very special place for the Christian community in Philippi as it is clear that the members had really taken on board everything he had taught them, and were truly living out the gospel in a way that warmed his heart. You can feel the warmth in the way he writes in today's reading. They have obviously really taken to heart the good news of the gospel, and are really living it out in their community. At the end of the

reading Paul encourages them to *“keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you”*. As disciples today we should take those words to ourselves, and hope that Jesus will be as proud of us for living out the Gospel in the world today as Paul was of the Christians in Philippi.

### Intercessions - Let us pray

Heavenly Father we come before you today in grateful thanks for this opportunity to share our faith and fellowship with one another safe from our own homes. We ask you to bless and guide our church leaders as they seek to meet the needs of their communities in such uncertain and challenging circumstances. We especially ask for your blessings on Father Rodney, our churchwardens and the many other members of St Mary's and beyond who continue help to bring us together at this time. We also remember all those faith communities who are not so fortunate and pray that their situation soon improves. Amen

Heavenly Father we bring before you our world facing so many problems. We pray especially for those areas of the world struggling to deal with the pandemic without the resources they need. We pray for refugees and migrants, for all those struggling in the face of violence, poverty and discrimination and for all those who are trying to bring aid to them, frequently putting their own lives at risk. We pray that the leaders of the world put self-interest and ego aside and work together to end these injustices. We also pray for wisdom and guidance for our own government as they attempt to respond to the pandemic and the many other issues they are dealing with at this time. Amen

Father we bring before you our families, friends and neighbours and as we continue to live with increasing local restrictions, we ask for the strength to deal with the difficulties this may cause us. We pray for our young people in school, college and university, and for their teachers and lecturers who appear to be particularly affected by the virus at the moment. We think of all those in our communities who are struggling to cope and particularly ask your blessings on the work of the Welcome Centre and all those who use its services. We also remember all those working in our health and other key services as well as the staff and

residents of our care homes. We give thanks for their service and pray for their safety and ask that they get the support they need at this time. Amen

Heavenly Father we bring before you all those who are sick in body mind or spirit, especially any we wish to pray for today.... We pray particularly for all those who are suffering in the pandemic, their families and all those who care for them as well as those working on treatments and vaccines. We pray for those whose treatment has been compromised and for all those who are anxious, afraid or lonely. We ask that they and all those in need be given the comfort and strength they need at this time. Amen

Finally Father, we remember today all those who have gone before us, those who have died recently, especially in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to pray for ourselves today... we thank you for their love, friendship and our memories of them and we pray for comfort and peace for their loved ones. Finally, remembering God's gift of eternal life we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory, Amen

***In a moment of silence bring your own prayers***

The Lords prayer

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. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.