

Collect, Readings and Sermon for Sunday 11th October 2020
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Collect

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Philippians 4:1-9

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. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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. 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.

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; 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.'

Sermon

Good morning all and I hope you are all well. I knew I was in for a difficult week when I picked up the Gospel and read about “weeping and gnashing of teeth” so thank you Theresa for giving me a good week to preach on and I hope there is not too much “weeping and gnashing of teeth” this morning! Well to describe this passage from Matthew this morning it really is like watching two halves of a game of football.

The first half is all about God.

I love how Matthew describes the actions of the Master. He invites all the guests to his son’s wedding banquet, and he lays it all on. Nothing is spared and only the best is put on for his son.

When the first lot of guests decide not to come and kill his slave’s he sends out the slaves again to bring in another bunch to celebrate the lavish banquet.

The Master just does not give up. He’s determined to celebrate that banquet for his son despite all the rejection from the invited guests.

I just love that determination of the Master and that is a reflection of God.

He is determined and is not going to waiver or give in despite how His people treat him. We can go off in all sorts of directions. We can turn off the music. We can pretend he’s not there and other things are far more important, but he will continue to reach out to us to get our attention.

The Master is a real “rock”.

If I look at my own faith journey which has had more twists and turns in it I can see the times when I’ve turned my back, turned away or just failed to acknowledge the presence of God and He just keeps inviting.

He doesn’t waiver in His desire to make His truth a reality. It’s just like the Master and his banquet. Over the past few months I’ve developed a walking circuit around Stoneleigh in order to keep active. My journey takes me past the Stoneleigh Baptist Church and their notice board. I always stop to see what poster they have put up and this week’s caption really caught my attention and it says, “Whether you like it or not God loves you!”

So, the first half of this game is all about the Master and his determination to bring his people in to celebrate his love just as the poster outside of the Baptist Church depicts.

Now the second half of this Gospel is about those who eventually turn up to the banquet.

One of them who turns up is not wearing a wedding robe and when he is challenged by the Master he is speechless. The guest does not know what to say in response.

So what Matthew is telling his early church is that God wants you here but it’s simply not good enough just to turn up. He wants you to play your part with all the gifts you have.

He wants you to live out those values of generosity, love, patience, forgiveness, humility and understanding.

He wants us to play our part and not be a passive onlookers letting everyone else take on the heavy lifting and tough stuff.

Matthew then explains the tough love of not being there to play our part has serious ramifications. The wedding guest in the parable who doesn't have the wedding gown ends up being bound up and thrown into the darkness where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

This is real tough judgement stuff but life is not just about hearing the call but being prepared to live it out and not just a passive onlooker.

There is no doubt life throws us all sorts of curve balls at the most unexpected times. Our challenge is to engage and respond to those curve balls in ways that are life-giving. The Master wants us to turn up to the banquet fully robed ready to respond in love.

The Master does not waiver and does not give up and calls us chosen if we are prepared to play our part even when it gets tough to avoid finding ourselves out in the dark "weeping and gnashing teeth". It's a tough game but God wants us in the game doing our part to bring His love alive for those around us who need some help to see it.

In the name of Christ. Amen.