

**URC Daily Devotions Worship
Sunday 11th October 2020**



The Rev'd John Grundy

Introduction

Good morning and welcome to worship and our time together today. My name is John Grundy and I am delighted to serve as the Minister of St. Andrew's Brockley and St. Michael's in the Milton Court Estate in New Cross, both of which are in South East London. St. Michael's is an Ecumenical Partnership with the Church of England.

Most of today's service I will be leading from the sanctuary at St. Andrew's but for the Communion portion of our service, we will be in St. Michael's. If you would like to see our churches to get a better sense of where I am speaking from, please do have a look at our website: www.standrewsbrockley.com.

Today we will be sharing in Holy Communion together and the invitation is for all of us to share this. I invite you to have some bread and wine, or whatever suitable alternative you have, ready for that part of the service.

With people we know, with people we will likely never meet, as the gathered people of Jesus together, let's pause and prepare to worship.

Call To Worship

The wisdom of God calls to us, from the heights, along the paths, and at the crossroads. Come into God's presence to worship, sing, and pray.

From our scattered places we come. Let us worship God.

Hymn: *Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him*

John Bell and Graham Moule

© Wild Goose Resource Worship Group

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as through word & song & prayer
we affirm
God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God
who keeps his promise;
praise the Son
who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who,
among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

2: Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of Life
and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness
saving all
who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

3: Jesus calls us to each other: found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language - such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger; join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter in their common search for truth.

Prayers Of Approach

God of the journey, we gather together, from wherever we are to worship and praise you. We realise that we can't know what will come next or what the future holds but we thank you for inviting us to walk with you. When life becomes challenging, we thank you for being there, for wanting to journey with us, for offering hope when hope seems fleeting and peace when peace is hard to see.

Loving God, sometimes life feels overwhelming and we forget where to place our faith, at times we get pulled by distractions and brighter lights. We forget you, we disregard to care for other people and their feelings, we neglect ourselves, our own wellbeing, our own hopes and dreams.

We bring all of those things we aren't proud of, the things we didn't do, the things we did, what we said, when we avoided 'that' person... and we lay it all down before you.

(pause)

Forgiving God, we thank you for renewing us for forgiving us and for breathing your love into us. We continue in prayer as we share the words of The Lord's Prayer together:

Our Father...

Reading: *St 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, mistreated 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."

Hymn: *Thy Hand O God Has Guided*
Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891)

Thy hand, O God, has guided thy flock, from age to age; the wondrous tale is written, full clear on every page; our fathers owned thy goodness, and we their deeds record; and both of this bear witness: one Church, one Faith, one Lord.	2: Thy heralds brought glad tidings to greatest as to least; they bade folk rise and hasten to share the great King's feast; and this was all their teaching in every deed and word; to all alike proclaiming: one Church, one Faith, one Lord.
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3: Thy mercy will not fail us, nor leave thy work undone;
with thy right hand to help us, the victory shall be won;
and then, by all creation thy name shall be adored,
and this shall be their anthem: one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Sources and Copyright

Call To Worship from *Worship Aids for the Revised Common Lectionary from the Presbyterian Church of the USA*

Affirmation of Faith from selected sections of the *Belhar Confession of Faith*.

Benediction from *Standing in the Gap*, written by Rev. Dr. Bob Gross, OCC, pastor at Lake Avenue United Church of Christ, Elyria, OH and posted on the United Church of Christ website.

All other prayers by John Grundy based on Rootsontheweb.com resources.

Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him by John Bell and Graham Moule from the BBC's Songs of Praise

Thy Hand O God Has Guided by Edward Hayes Plumptre from the BBC's Songs of Praise.

For Your Generous Providing by The Rev'd Leith Fisher performed by the Scottish Festival Singers, Ian McCrorie (Conductor), John Langdon (Organ) made available by the Church of Scotland.

Sanctus and *Agnus Dei* by Paul Inwood © Magnificat Music performed by the Choir of Brentwood Cathedral.

We are Marching from a Zulu folk song written down by Andries Van Tonder. Performed by the KwaSisabantu Mission.

Thanks To:

Jonnie Hill and Adam Scott, Ruth and Kingsley Browning, Phil, Lythan and Carys Nevard for recording the Call to Worship and Affirmation of Faith and John Young, David Shimmin, Anne Hewling, Lorraine Webb, and Carol Tubbs for recording other spoken parts of the service.

Prayer of illumination:

Will you pray with me?

Loving God, take the smallness of the words I share and use them to speak as you need them to be heard. Open our hearts to respond to your calling; open our minds to consider your love at work within us, around us and despite us. Amen

Sermon:

I remember, many years ago, I led worship at my sending church dressed, not in the usual shirt and tie I would wear, but wearing Jeans and a hoody. Somewhere in the dim corners of my brain I remember there was a really good reason for this, I might have been going straight from church to somewhere else, but that detail is escaping me.

Of course, no one commented on the fact I wasn't wearing a suit and tie but, in my head, I could very loudly hear a disapproving tut from my Grandmother.

She was a remarkable person in many ways, as were all of my Grandparents, but Grandma was the one, as children, that we sat with in church. She did teach me a lot... but somehow never taught me to not fidget! Grandma came from that almost indestructible generation that lived through the blitz and was, like many people we would see on Sunday's mornings in the North of Liverpool, someone who always wore a hat and gloves and her Sunday coat to go to church in.

What you wore for church mattered not because someone else might judge you, but it was much more because you wore your best clothes as an outward sign of the honour you were paying to God.

I see this still in the members of the churches I was called to serve here in South East London. Our church family at both of our churches come

from across the world, bringing different traditions, experiences and stories... but for all of us, how we honour the Lord's Day remains important.

This parable that Jesus shared is of course about much more than making sure you show up in hats and gloves or a jacket and tie.

In some ways, this story could be read as a story of outrageous hospitality.

Jesus tells us about a King, a proud father, a proud father who is giving a banquet in honour of his son's wedding. Jesus doesn't tell us which one of his sons this is, but there's a fairly strong chance that in this parable, Jesus wants us to think about the oldest, the heir to the kingdom. This could easily be the wedding of this country's next king.

Like with all of those royal weddings we've seen on the television, we can imagine that the list of guests would be packed with the great and the good, the allies, those with power, those the King really wants to show the son off to. So, the king sends the slaves out to get them to come... and all that comes back are insults and refusals. None of the people with position want to be there.

You can see why the king is really angry, any of us might be if we had been insulted, maybe humiliated. At this point in the story, it pauses. We get this interesting gap which allows the king's rage to happen. The troops are called together, they go out, the invited guests are murdered, their cities destroyed. The banquet is paused for the bloodshed to happen and then the king starts to prepare again.

This time though, anyone the slaves can find get brought into the banqueting hall, anyone at all – good, bad, a bit of both – all are called to come and join the party.

Hymn: *We Are Marching*

Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni kwenkos, Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos'.
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni kwenkos', Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos'.
[ekukhanyeni kwenkos']
Siyahamba... ooh
[Siyahamba, hamba, Siyahamba, hamba]
Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos'.
[ekukhanyeni kwenkos']
Siyahamba... ooh
[Siyahamba, hamba, Siyahamba, hamba]
Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos'.

We are marching in the light of God. We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God, we are marching in the light of God.
[in the light of God] We are marching... ooh
[We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,]
We are marching in the light of God. [the light of God]
We are marching... ooh
[We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,]
We are marching in the light of God.

Benediction

We go, strengthened to do the work of Jesus, standing in the gap, extending the invitation to the eternal banquet, rejoicing in God. Let your gentleness be known to everyone and don't worry about anything. The God who created you, Jesus who redeems you and the Spirit who empowers you is with you today and ever more. **Amen.**

When Jesus had given thanks, he gave his cup to those gathered there and said: “Take and drink all of you, for this is the blood of the new covenant spilt for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin”

As we follow the example of Jesus, I invite you, if you are able, to hold the bread: This is Jesus’s body broken for you – so let us take and eat.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, Jesus, Lamb of God,
Jesus, Saviour, have mercy on us!
Jesus, bearing all our sin, Jesus, bearing all our sin,
Jesus, Saviour, have mercy on us!
Jesus, Redeemer of the World, Jesus, Redeemer of the World,
Jesus, Saviour, O give us your peace!**

I invite you, if you are able, to hold the wine:
The blood of Jesus poured out for each one of us – take it and drink it.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, Jesus, Lamb of God,
Jesus, Saviour, have mercy on us!
Jesus, bearing all our sin, Jesus, bearing all our sin,
Jesus, Saviour, have mercy on us!
Jesus, Redeemer of the World, Jesus, Redeemer of the World,
Jesus, Saviour, O give us your peace!**

Prayer of thanks

Loving God, You have met us here and fed us again, may our hands be prepared to work for you, may our eyes see what you show us, may our ears hear your voice speak to us and call us, may our hearts burn with the hope that you have given to us. We thank you God for all that you have offered to us here, may we respond as you need us to. May we go and tell of your love. Amen.

I like to imagine the face of the never-mentioned bride at this point – by now she will have realised that she has married the son of a really angry king, but all of the guests at her big day have been dragged in off the streets to make the place look fuller than it was.

I don’t imagine that’s what any bride would put on her wish-list as she dreams of her special day, but in this parable that is definitely what this poor girl has got.

Perhaps she thought the grumpiness of her new Father in law was sort of over with now... but it doesn’t seem to be the case. Instead of celebrating a job done, a wonderful day sorted, his son and daughter-in-law happily married... the king spots someone not dressed in the way he expected and loses his temper yet again.

We have another affront to the already fragile ego of our insulted king – a guest not wearing the correct robes for this occasion.

And the guest is thrown from the building, hands and feet bound, thrown into the darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth and weeping!

And that’s where Jesus ends this story but really this is a story of reactions, overreactions, and it is overly absurd on purpose.

But what this story is though is a bit disturbing.

In many ways Jesus sharing a parable which lays out what disobedience and retribution looks like in the much bigger scripture story. This story in Matthew 22 forms part of the story of the last week of Jesus’s life. Immediately before it in Matthew 21, we read “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet”. Our passage began, “once

more Jesus spoke to them in parables”. This parable is almost Jesus saying - whoa! hang on, I’ve more to say to you... I’m not finished yet.

This is another story of insult, and another story of those who should know better not giving due recognition and the honour that they should. And again, it is those people who should be more aware of what God is doing among them that are at risk of being left behind in the future that Jesus’s parables explore.

As I read this passage this week, I wondered if what I needed to see this time was the call to radical and open hospitality? The king does throw the doors open and does offer this glorious banquet to everyone. He even calls the man friend... and then spoils it by throwing him into the place of tears and teeth gnashing.

I wonder if you feel sorry for that man too. How could he have got a beautiful wedding robe to wear? He was outside on the streets five minutes ago.

We should never take this parable as an excuse to evict people from our churches if they’ve not come that day in hats and gloves or suits and ties and even, I’m sorry to say it, if they have inadvertently sat in our pew...

The way people are dressed isn’t the message of this parable for me.

The man was at the banquet, he got in with everyone else – but maybe, we are supposed to think of him as someone who was there but who didn’t take the hugeness of what he was being offered seriously enough?

Sometimes it can be easy to forget just how wonderful that radical open invitation to be part of the transformative life of Jesus really is, and to be in relationship not just with God, with Jesus but with fellow pilgrims journeying together through joys, sadness’s, through challenges: this year through a pandemic?

you welcomed the stranger, you reached outside society’s expectations, beyond tradition and though the power of empire.

Help us to be mirrors of your glory, to be the people that you need us to be so that we can shine as beacons of hope and love in your world. Transforming God, we thank you that your Holy Spirit meets with us and we pray that she will take these human made gifts and symbols: Wheat harvested, baked and prepared; Grapes picked, trodden and transformed and make them for us your body broken and shared and your blood spilt and poured out and offered. All of this we ask in Jesus’ name... Amen.

For all that we are offered here, we thank God, as we gather at our own tables, as we hear again the story, and as we consider the signs of Jesus’s love for us: the cross a sign of Jesus’ arm stretched out in love His empty tomb a declaration that God’s love is greater than human power and stronger than death.

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full, Heaven and earth are full of your glory!
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!**

May God’s peace be with you always, with your community and the world we live in. Amen.

Sharing:

When Jesus had given thanks, he took bread and broke it and said: “Take and eat, this is my body which is broken for you”

Invitation:

In our own homes, at our own tables, we meet with Jesus. At our own tables, Jesus calls us to meet him and Jesus knows us. He welcomes us without the need for show, without the need to be what others expect us to be, without any baggage that might be weighing us down. Come, together in our own spaces you have been given a welcome.

Come and drink of the love of God, which has been poured out for each of us; Come and taste the bread – the bread which isn't dependant on the supermarket shelf or the food bank parcel The bread which never spoils, which never grows mould Come and share, come and experience, come and see.

Narrative:

We hear again the story of that night: *While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body'. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I tell you, I will never again drink the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'* (Mark 14: 22-24)

We are the friends of Jesus today. He invites us to break bread together, to remember him and to pray that God's Kingdom will come.

We pray together:

Thank you loving God for these gifts which we share and for the love that you give to us. We meet with you here filled with your promise of welcome and community. So, we gather here as we are, as you need us to be and as you have called. Long ago, you welcomed your people to you and made known your greatness and glory; you sought out the outcast,

It would be one thing to just show up. It's another thing to be in relationship – ready to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world – that needs us to be ready, together and alone.

How wonderful would it be if the whole world stopped worrying about what 'clothes' we are wearing, we need to make sure that we are making sure we are clothed, and sharing, love, justice, peace, hope and compassion. Those are the gifts of God which we can all share.

And what matters more than what we wear is that we strive to live a life without pretence and take seriously the gift of grace that Jesus offers. We are invited to be in relationship with one another, with God, with Jesus. Let's embrace the gift. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Do you believe in the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects, and cares for the Church through Word and Spirit. This God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

We do

Do you believe that God is the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people. **We do.**

Do you believe that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged? **We do.**

This is the faith of the Church! We are proud to confess it in Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Hymn: *For Your Generous Providing*
© The Rev'd Leith Fisher

For your generous providing
which sustain us all our days,
for your Spirit here residing,
we proclaim our heartfelt praise.
Through the depths
of joy and sorrow,
though the road
be smooth or rough,
fearless, we can face tomorrow
for your grace will be enough.

2: Hush our world's
seductive noises
tempting us to stand alone;
save us from the siren voices
calling us to trust our own.
For those snared by earthly
treasure,
lured by false security,
Jesus, true and only measure,
spring the trap to set folk free.

3: Round your table, through your giving, show us how to live and pray
till your kingdom's way of living is the bread we share each day:
bread for us and for our neighbour, bread for body, mind, and soul,
bread of heav'n and human labour – broken bread that makes us whole.

Introduction to offertory:

We have been given so much from God: skills, opportunities,
relationships and hopes. So let us together consider what we have and
how we offer it to God as we pray together.

Loving God, we bring ourselves and our gifts for the wider work of your
kingdom. Use who we are, what we offer; all of our experiences and our
hopes. Use them to make change within us, around us and despite us,
help us to build community, to share peace and to create spaces of
grace. Amen.

Prayer of Intercession:

We now approach God in prayer. This service has been recorded in
advance so should there have been a huge event happen this week,
please know that we are all praying for it and in the silence, I invite you
to pray for it too.

Loving God, today, we pray for your world, for places and people we
know, and those we don't. We pray for places where there have been
wars and disasters: help us to respond to the needs we see as we can.

We pray for people who are continuing to shield, or aren't yet ready to
leave home: be with them and support them.

We pray for people who are grieving, struggling to move on or needing
peace: Loving God, we pray that you will help us to support them as best
as we can, at the right time, but help us to know when to listen and not
to speak and 'be' and not 'do'.

We pray for ourselves, our communities and our churches: Knowing our
own issues, local needs and the challenges we all face, we offer, into the
silence, our own private prayers:

Gracious God, **Hear our prayers**

We thank you for listening to us, for hearing our concerns and needs
and for knowing how we can be best held, supported and loved. Loving
God, accept these, and all of our prayers, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Holy Communion

As we come to share in Holy Communion, we bring the bread and wine
that we prepared earlier and pause as we prepare to share in this meal
with one another.