

Sunday 11th October – Morning Worship for Trinity 19

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>



Gathering Prayer

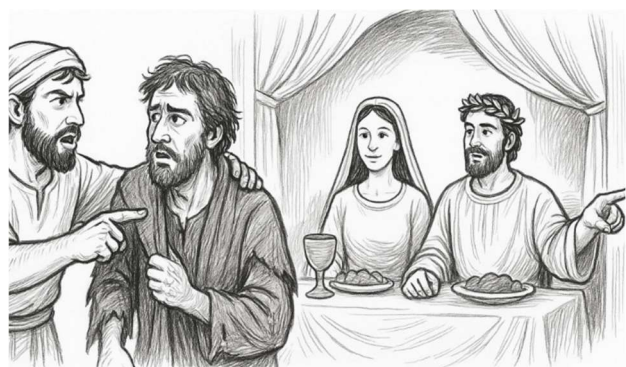
Welcome in the name of Christ.

God's grace, mercy and peace be with you
and also with you.

Opening Words

Almighty God,
your Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence.
Give us new hearts and constant wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Hymn - Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

- 1 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.
- 2 Open now the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield.
- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan

bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

Arglwydd arwain drwy'r anialwch William Williams (1717-1791)
Translated by Peter Williams (1727-1796) (Public Domain)

Saying Sorry

Brothers and sisters,
as we prepare to celebrate,
let us call to mind our sins.

**Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have wandered and strayed from your ways
like lost sheep.**

**We have followed too much the devices and desires
of our own hearts.**

We have offended against your holy laws.

**We have left undone those things
that we ought to have done;
and we have done those things
that we ought not to have done;
and there is no health in us.**

But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us sinners.

Spare those who confess their faults.

**Restore those who are penitent,
according to your promises declared to mankind
in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,
that we may live a disciplined, righteous and godly life,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free you from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Readings read by Ann Griffiths

Isaiah 25:1-9

25 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.

2 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.

3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

4 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,
5 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.

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained
clear.

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

8 he will swallow up death for ever.
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.

9 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.

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Matthew 22:1-14

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ² ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴ 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.” ⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.

⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.” ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ ‘But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹² and he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?” And he was speechless.

¹³ 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.” ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by Sue Nelms

Let us pray - Now, O Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you. Amen.

Let me tell you a couple of little stories. My mother-in-law used to live in Devon, over 250 miles away from us. Just before Christmas one year we had arranged to go and visit her – after all we did not get to see her very often. We drove for several hours with the children in the car – they were still quite small so you can imagine how enthusiastic they were about that! We had been at my mother-in-law's for about 10 minutes when she announced that it was lovely to see us and now she was about to go out shopping with my sister-in-law, someone who lived in the same village and whom she saw every day. Rick and I looked at each other then I said "That is a shame because we were just about to offer to take you out for lunch." "Oh" she replied. And then came the sudden realisation that she didn't actually need any shopping and was available for a free lunch after all!

At university if my friends and I were going to the cinema we would invite Rick and he would always say no, then complain because we went without him so we learned to ask him 24 hours before we were actually going to give him time to get over the no-nos and change his mind and then he didn't miss out!

People do not always respond appropriately to an invitation. We see this repeatedly in this morning's gospel passage.

In today's gospel reading we have a king who has invited all of his friends to a wedding banquet for his son. That is a big event in someone's life. When everything was prepared he sent his servants out to tell everyone who had been invited that the banquet was ready and that they should come and 'eat, drink and be merry' but everyone he had invited said that they were no longer coming. He probably didn't believe it, gave everyone the benefit of the doubt and sent reminders to them all and this time they responded by coming up with totally pathetic excuses and then actually abusing the man's servants, even going as far as killing some of them! As you might imagine, the man was extremely cross and exacted a price from them for their actions.

However, he still had the challenge of a wedding banquet to deal with so he came up with a new plan. He sent his servants out again, this time to invite anyone and everyone they found out on the streets, good and bad, and they filled the banqueting room with these new guests, who were probably all extremely excited at the offer.

Well, possibly all except one. The host noticed that there was a guest who was not wearing a wedding robe and this particular guest has always puzzled me. My first thought has always been to feel sorry for him. After all, he is possibly homeless and come in off the streets just as the host said should happen. With the knowledge I have of modern life, it is not surprising that he is not wearing wedding clothes because he probably wasn't expecting to attend a wedding feast that day and may not even have an outfit 'for best' and it does seem unfair to me that the host would launch into him so vigorously.

However I am making my judgement on inaccurate information. I don't have the complete picture. You see, in Biblical times, the wedding host would provide everyone with a wedding robe to wear. So the man in front of the host was prepared to accept the host's hospitality but was not prepared to wear the robes provided; to keep to his side of the bargain so to speak. When asked to explain himself, he said nothing in his defence, presumably because there was nothing he could or would say to defend himself – after all he had been offered a suitable robe - and he was probably well aware that he was in the wrong.

As we have heard various times over recent weeks, Jesus has told us that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to various things or people, and today it is compared to the king who gave the wedding banquet for his son. We have also heard of situations where that son has been rejected and killed and indeed some of the servants were killed in this story. Jesus has been speaking primarily to the Pharisees who have been taking the benefits of being part of God's kingdom here on earth but who have also been rejecting the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. In the parable of the wicked tenants that Lynne spoke about last week the son was killed, just

as some of the servants were in this story, and just as Jesus would be killed at the crucifixion.

In this morning's parable, the wedding host had provided the wedding robes for guests to wear; all they had to do was turn up and accept that hospitality. So God provides for us. We don't have to worry; all we need to do is accept and believe.

In Matthew 6 we read 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6.25-32). The first wave of wedding guests had turned their back on the King. The second wave of wedding guests didn't even have to seek the King out; he sent his servants looking for them and offering them a place at the feast. Yet the guest who didn't even have the grace to wear the robe that was given to him simply threw his generosity back in the King's face.

The wedding guests would all have been properly dressed to attend the wedding feast, but it cost them nothing because the wedding host had provided everything that they needed – both food and clothing.

God provides us with everything we need to enter his Kingdom, his wedding feast. We have the word of God. As Jesus said “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never hunger” (John 6:35). Jesus is our ultimate source of spiritual nourishment. Just like we rely on physical food to keep our bodies alive, we rely on Him to satisfy the deepest needs of our souls. In embracing this promise, we find a life that is truly fulfilling and free from the emptiness this world often brings.

If we wholeheartedly accept the invitation and hospitality God offers us, we will be properly dressed to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Don't be like the ungrateful wedding guest – embrace the invitation.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Prayers of Intercession prepared by Rick Nelms

Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus' commands about how the Church and its people should be, and the Acts of the Apostles, and letters and epistles which tell us how the early Church put those commands into

action in the context of the prophecies in the Old Testament. We pray that the Church of Christ today will be obedient to your wishes, to be a servant Church, befriending people and meeting them and meeting their needs, whatever and wherever they are. We pray for the Church of Christ to be an inclusive, loving Church, reaching out and touching the lives of the untouchable, excluded people today, just as Jesus did, sitting down and eating with sinners and tax collectors. We pray for all Churches to be truly safe places, where people understand the importance of safeguarding, not as a waste of time, but as a way of ensuring that everyone aspires to the same high moral and behavioural standards that Jesus expects of us all.

God of Love; **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for our world and for all the good leaders who make decisions which truly benefit all of their people, all the good leaders who resist the temptations of corruption. We pray for all the innocent people impacted by someone else's greedy, selfish and foolish war, across the Middle East, Africa, and all across the world. We pray for those whose lives are blighted by natural disasters: too much rain, too little rain, destructive winds, earthquakes and volcanoes. We pray for those projects which produce energy and materials sustainably, and for the world to move forward from destructive use of fossil fuels and other unsustainable resources. We pray for the protection and inclusion of all those vulnerable people who are bullied, excluded or killed, for the colour of their skin, for being female, for being neurodiverse, disabled or otherwise different.

God of Love; **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the beauty of creation, from the incomprehensibilities of physics at the smallest scales to all the trillions of galaxies, each made up of unimaginably many stars and planets. We pray for our little sphere of creation, the Earth, the only world we have, so beautiful and yet so fragile. We pray for an end to plastic pollution and release of greenhouse gases, those which cause acid rain and destroy our protective ozone layer. We pray for the extraordinary diversity of living organisms with which we share this planet, for their conservation and

protection. Please also protect those indigenous people, so many of whom live in their ancient ancestral lands yet are effectively stateless, or have been excluded from their homelands. Help us to bring an end to all policies of apartheid, discrimination and hatred; to replace war with peace, exclusion with inclusion and hate with love.

God of Love; **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for our communities wherever they may be, for our families, friends, neighbours including those we find it hard to like. We pray for everyone who serves to make our communities function, whether employed or as formal or informal volunteers. We pray for all those involved in health and social care, education, providing suitable food, safe drinking water, housing and the transport systems which link us together as well as everyone who is involved in waste disposal, recycling and reuse. Help the Church of Christ to be integral to the proper functioning of our communities, a force for inclusion, peace and love in society.

God of Love; **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, thank you for your promised Holy Spirit being with us every step of our journey through all of our lives including the hard parts and the bits that are difficult to understand. We thank you for the confidence that though Jesus' life incarnate, as one of us, you understand all aspects of suffering. We pray for all those who suffer in mind, body or spirit. Support everyone who lives with pain, fatigue, loneliness, excessive cold or heat, hunger, homelessness, unemployment and lack of purpose, trapped in poverty or in loveless or abusive relationships. Help us to be there when we are needed, to support those who are suffering, to be your feet, your hands, your voice where you call us to be. Help us to hear and understand your call.

God of Love; **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for your mercy, forgiveness, peace and love. We pray that everyone who is dying has a sense of your closeness and love, and for everyone who mourns, whether the emotion is fresh and raw or ancient but still able to surprise. We thank you for all who have

died in the faith, both those whose faith is known to all and those whose faith is known to you alone. We all look forward to the day when we share the fullness of the resurrection. Rejoicing in the communion of the saints, every Christian who has ever been, let us commend ourselves, and one another, and all our life, to God. Amen

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Collect

O God, forasmuch as without you
we are not able to please you;
mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our hearts;
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

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever.**

Amen.

Hymn – The kingdom of God is justice and joy

- 1 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.
- 2 The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,
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.
- 3 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.
- 4 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!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983) © Alexander Scott (One License 28013)

Notices

Conclusion

Keep us, Father, in this community of faith,
the Church of your Son Jesus Christ,
and help us to confess him as Messiah and Lord
in all we say and do.

We ask this in his name.

And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen