



READINGS AND COLLECT FOR SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2020
18TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

COLLECT

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 for ever.

Psalm 106.1-6 + 19-23

1 Alleluia.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious, ◆
for his faithfulness endures for ever.

2 Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord ◆
or show forth all his praise?

3 Blessed are those who observe what is right ◆
and always do what is just.

4 Remember me, O Lord, in the favour you bear for your people; ◆
visit me in the day of your salvation;

5 That I may see the prosperity of your chosen
and rejoice in the gladness of your people, ◆
and exult with your inheritance.

6 We have sinned like our forebears; ◆
we have done wrong and dealt wickedly.

19 They made a calf at Horeb ◆
and worshipped the molten image;

20 Thus they exchanged their glory ◆
for the image of an ox that feeds on hay.

21 They forgot God their saviour, ◆
who had done such great things in Egypt,

22 Wonderful deeds in the land of Ham ◆
and fearful things at the Red Sea.

23 So he would have destroyed them,
had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, ♦
to turn away his wrath from consuming them.

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Philippians 4.1-9

1 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.

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

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

8 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. 9 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

1 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, mistreated 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."

Reflection – this week from Mary-Lou

We know a thing or two about royal weddings in this country, don't we? I have a happy memory of one of the staff at Westminster Abbey turning a celebratory cartwheel in the nave after Prince William's! But this parable of Jesus about the wedding of the King's son is far from happy – there's a celebration, yes, the wedding banquet, but the whole thing is an angry, urgent and violent event. It's difficult, and really challenging. I'm grateful to the scholar Jane Williams for her thoughts on the passage, which I'm sharing with you in this homily.

Part of the anger comes from the opening verses. The King is throwing a party for his Son. The wedding banquet is a glorious and spectacular occasion for rejoicing, and most people would beg, borrow and steal to get themselves invited! But these strange people either don't care at all, or else they see it as a positive nuisance, to the point where they beat up the messengers delivering the invitation. What's he got to do with us, they say? He won't make our businesses run. He won't generate an income for us. So they reject the Son. They reject not just him, but also their share in the future of the nation he represents. Then there's the sense of urgency. The King says everything is ready, now! It cannot wait, it will not keep, it's now or never. Why don't the invited guests realise? They will never again get the chance to go to a royal wedding. We've had three parables from Jesus, all about the way his audience are giving up on their chance to share in the kingdom. The stories get more and more pointed, making it clearer and clearer that all of this is focused on Jesus. Jesus and the Kingdom of God go together. To reject one is to reject the other. It's clear that from the way they react to all three of the stories, that the Pharisees – some of the religious leaders – understand Jesus and that he's getting at them. They just don't believe it! They don't believe this ordinary human being, standing before them, taking liberties with the tradition that only they understand and are authorised to interpret, has their lives in his hand. They don't believe that their reaction to him will decide their fates. Would we have done? Or might we – any of us – have been the man without a wedding robe? It's very hard to feel this man is treated fairly! After all, he didn't know he was going to be invited, and if the rest of the guests were picked up off the streets, how well-dressed were any of them?

We can imagine this poor guest sitting there, eating as much as he can, filling up his cup, not sure what he's doing there, but determined to make the most of it! Then all of a sudden, there's the King! And the man's completely thrown. Maybe he thought he was just there for a free feed! Maybe he had no idea he was celebrating at the Prince's wedding banquet. The King asks him a fairly friendly question, but instead of responding, the man keeps silent, and he loses his chance to stay at the table. Out he goes!

Like the people who rejected the first invitations, this guest is not interested in his relationship with the King. He never expected or wanted to meet him or speak to him, and he doesn't care what the banquet is for.

This is Matthew's solemn warning: it's all about the King. Unless we have come to rejoice with the Son, there is nothing for us here. Tough stuff. But when we do respond with joy that we can come to know and receive the love of the King, with all the mercy and grace and wonder of life that is offered, that is the heart of the good news he brings.

Drawn from: Jane Williams, Lectionary Reflections Year A