



Worship resources Trinity 17

One of the toughest question we face as people of faith concerned with justice and peace, is how to hold together the invitation of the Gospel with the confrontation that God's reign brings against personal and corporate sin and evil. But, as tough as it may be, we do not have the luxury of avoiding this question, and this week's Lectionary brings us face to face with it in dramatic and helpful ways.

May our worship this week invite us deeper into God's reign and confront the places in our lives where we refuse God's reign entrance into us.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Exodus 32:1-14: While Moses is on the mountain with God, the people, struggling with how long he has been gone, ask Aaron to make them gods. He agrees, takes their gold jewellery and makes a golden calf which the people then worship, even though he tries to remind them that their celebration is "to the Lord".

OR **Isaiah 25:1-9**: A song of praise to God who brings down tyrants, provides refuge for the poor and needy, brings an end to death and creates a celebration for all people on God's holy mountain, removing the shame of God's people.

Psalms 106:1-6, 19-23: A psalm of confession, remembering how God's people turned away, and traded God for an image of a calf, forgetting God's saving acts for them. Also, a recognition that God seemed intent on destroying the people, but for Moses pleading on their behalf.

OR **Psalms 23**: A song of thanksgiving and security, recognising that God cares for and guides God's people as a Shepherd.

Philippians 4 : 1-9

Our weekly readings from this warm and affectionate letter comes to an end with some personal messages, and a resounding call to constancy in prayer, to mutual love, and to an intense dedication to all the best things in life within God's peace.

Matthew 22 : 1-14

In Jerusalem, Jesus's parable is a lesson for those who oppose him, and for all who do not accept his invitation to join him in feasting in his kingdom.

Readings at:

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Pentecost/AProp23_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Lord, we pray thee
that thy grace may always prevent and follow us,
and make us continually to be given to all good works;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
Teach us to offer ourselves to your service,
that here we may have your peace,
and in the world to come may see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

A: Jesus revealed God's Kingdom in parables and by healing the sick and sharing his table with all who came to him. Let us pray for God's Kingdom to come more fully in the world saying, "Your Kingdom come," and responding, "Your will be done."

For the Church throughout Latin America, that they may be strengthened in their ministry as they uphold the poor and speak to their governments about God's justice; and for the Church in the rest of the world, that we might find meaningful ways to support and uphold them.

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

For governments and corporations that they might see job creation as their responsibility and the building up of the human community as their bottom line,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

For the unemployed that they may find meaningful work and be treated with dignity,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

For all those who work hard in the church: Mothers' Union, altar guilds, property committees, financial officers, teachers, youth leaders, choir members, Select Vestry, those who visit the sick and shut-in, that they may be rewarded with a renewed sense that they are working in God's kingdom,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

For the sick and those with special needs, especially _____, that God might nourish them with friendships and hope,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

For our parish, that all of us may learn to measure people by God's infinite love and not by society's standards of usefulness,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done.

Abundant God, you invite us to celebrate your generosity. Help us to repent of our miserly stewardship of your grace and teach us to live as if your Kingdom were already here in its fullness. We pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

As we rejoice in the Lord always, let us make known our requests to God, the refuge of the poor and needy.

For *N* our bishop and *N* our rector, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For candidates for public office and for mercy, justice, and peace among all peoples.

Lord, have mercy.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth and peaceful times.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city/ton/parish and those who live in it and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

God the king of heaven, who wipes away every tear, hear the prayers we offer this day and clothe us in robes of white for the wedding banquet of your Son; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

God our guide,
you feed us with bread from heaven
as you fed your people Israel.
May we who have been inwardly nourished
be ready to follow you
all the days of our pilgrimage on earth,
until we come to your kingdom in heaven.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

God of Aaron, Miriam, and Moses,
you stayed the hand of your wrath
when we fell into idolatry and discord;
and when we forgot our deliverance,
your love for us remained unchanging.
Transform us and our world
into a place of justice, love, and peace.
Welcome us to your wedding feast
where all are invited to be gathered in. Amen.

Lord of the feast,
you have prepared a table before all peoples
and poured out life with such abundance
that death cannot claim the triumph over your universe.
Call us again to your banquet where we may receive your holy food,
and strengthened by what is honourable, just, and pure,
be transformed into a people of righteousness and peace. Amen.

Almighty God,
source of every blessing,
your generous goodness comes to us anew every day.
By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness,
give thanks for your benefits,
and serve you in willing obedience;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord of creation, whose glory is around and within us: open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence and know your peace at our lives' end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

Lord, in your goodness, open our eyes to your light and so fill our hearts with your glory, that we may acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and hold fast to his word in sincerity and truth. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen *Methodist Worship*

God of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness and of your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

O God, from whom to be turned is to fall, to whom to be turned is to rise, and in whom to stand is to abide for ever: grant us in all our duties your help, in all

our perplexities your guidance, in all our dangers your protection, and in all our sorrows your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen *St Augustine, 354-430*

Almighty God, source of every blessing, your generous goodness comes to us anew every day. By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience. Indeed we pray you to pour out your Holy Spirit upon us - your Spirit of joy and laughter - of comfort and of strength - that we might celebrate with you and you with us, as we offer our worship and ourselves to you this day; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear God. Fill us with those things that are good: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable. Help us to put into practice what we have learned from your Word. Loving God, you have invited us to feast in your promised Kingdom. May we never be so busy that we cannot turn to you, and thankfully celebrate the power of Your Son. Amen

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Exodus 32:1-14:

At first, the story of the golden calf strikes me as ridiculous - who would want to worship or take any such comfort in a cow made out of gold?

What can a golden cow do for you?

But then I think of the idols we have today: money - certainly a gold cow might symbolize that?! Possessions, even people. We put many things before God. Anything we put before God is an idol. *Anything.*

Does God need to be persuaded? Without Moses 'imploping' God, would God fail to be merciful? I don't think so.

"And the Lord changed his mind." Everything I think theologically screams out at this notion of God just having a sort-of temper tantrum/ mood swing until Moses "sweet talks" God. What do you think?

Psalms 106:1-6, 19-23:

"Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times." I like the wording - *do* righteousness, as opposed to *are* righteous. Righteousness, grammatically or not, is an action - a *doing* word, not a *being* word.

This psalm relates to the Exodus reading, and calls for repentance from sin. The psalmist actually recalls much of the story of God, Moses, and the Israelites, so make sure to read the whole Psalm.

Again, a sense here that God changed God's mind, being persuaded by Moses.

Philippians 4:1-9:

Euodia and Syntyche - often overlooked examples of women in the Bible who are clearly in leadership roles. Paul comments that these women "have struggled beside [him] in the work of the gospel." This seems pretty clear on their position, co-workers with men in gospel work. Celebrate!

V. 5 – “Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”

The Greek might translate also as “reasonableness”, “fairness”, “goodness”. Gentleness is not necessarily a trait we value, is it?

Particularly not in both genders. It’s ok for a woman, but we don’t often praise men for gentleness. How can we let our gentleness be known? What does that have to do with our faith? The command from Paul flows into the second phrase, ‘The Lord is near.’ How do they relate?

V. 7 – “And the peace of God which passes . . . “ – The ‘passes understanding’ is from the Greek ‘huperechô’, which means, “to be above” or “to hold over”, “to prevail.” God’s peace is above *everything*. That’s comforting.

Think on excellent things. I like that advice! Oh yeah, and do all the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in Paul. Sometimes, Paul's modesty kills me.

Matthew 22:1-14:

Usually the parables are challenging, but in a way I find compelling. I must admit, this parable is challenging in a more troubling way to me - we must dig deep for understanding! Check out Chris Haslam's always helpful [notes](#) for some more comments.

Notice the similarities and striking differences between this parable and the parable in [Luke 14](#).

In Matthew, it is specifically a king inviting guests to a wedding. They won't come, and what's more, they kill the king's slaves - they are aggressive in their rejection of the king's invitation.

So, the king takes whoever he can get as guests - but, a guest who is not properly dressed is bound and ejected into the darkness, where there is weeping and teeth-gnashing. What a consequence!!

"Many are called, few are chosen." Is this a good summary? Does God call many of us, only to reject many of us? Is this the gospel writer's take on the parable, instead of Jesus'?

How do you respond to invitations you receive? Do you always RSVP? Do you show up unprepared? What can we learn about how we are to respond to God's invitations?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week's reading are a bit startling, perhaps even shocking, at first glance. The shock is found in the rather violent way that God's judgement is portrayed, especially in Jesus' parable. However, this image must be placed in context with another theme that also emerges from the readings this week – that of inclusive welcome. Let's begin with the Gospel. Here Jesus tells a parable of a king inviting guests to his son's wedding. When the guests refuse to come, the king responds in anger and violence, but then invites those who would not normally be welcomed to come to the feast. Following the other parables of the last few weeks, this invitation is a clear indictment against the religious leaders who should have been willing to accept God's invitation into God's reign, but who refuse. The king's response in the parable must not be taken literally as God's response to the leaders, but it does serve to indicate that God does not simply accept their rejection of Christ. Then, there is the further shock of the person who is rejected for having the wrong clothes. This would indicate that entrance into God's reign requires us to adopt the "clothes" (the ways of being) of God's reign. The invitation is open to all, but we only experience God's life when we allow God's reign into us. With that as the background, then, we can see both the invitation and the confrontation of God's reign. This is expressed through the other readings as well. In Exodus, the people, who have been rescued from oppression, turn away from God and stir God to anger. But, in the person of Moses as a kind of "conscience" for God, God remembers grace and continues to lead God's people. In Isaiah there is the song of praise for the celebration (resonant of the wedding feast) on God's mountain for all people. The Psalms echo the two Old Testament readings, revealing that, as much as God saves us, we need to remember God's grace and allow it to change us (Ps. 106), and when we do allow this, we know the joy and peace of being like sheep nurtured by a divine Shepherd (Ps.23). Finally, in Paul's letter to the Philippians, the life of grace that is possible for all those who have come into God's reign and allowed God's reign into them is described – united, gracious, expectant and focussed on the best qualities of life, all leading to a sense of God's presence and peace. So, in spite of the seemingly violent first impressions of this week's lectionary, the conclusion the readings invite us to is the peace of God which passes understanding.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It can be hard to hold both confrontation and

invitation together as we seek to follow Jesus in the world. It is all too easy to emphasise confrontation, judge those with whom we disagree, stand against our opponents and embrace some form of violence in order to achieve our goals – and then, even though our goals may be good, or in line with God's reign, we end up becoming the same as what we oppose. On the other hand it is all too easy to emphasise God's invitation, be naive about evil, and run the risk of bringing those who need protection into harm's way because the ones who threaten them are allowed to continue unchecked. It is crucial then, that we hold these two elements of the Gospel together, recognising that God's reign does not seek only to bring all people in, but seeks also to get in to all people. It is important that we follow Jesus' lead in confronting evil and those who perpetrate it. It is important that we hold ourselves and others accountable to God's standards of grace and justice and peace. However, it is also important that we follow Jesus' lead in welcoming all people, especially the excluded, marginalised and vulnerable. It is important that, like Jesus, we seek to bring grace and healing, justice and basic survival requirements to those who need it. It is impossible to work for justice effectively unless we do both. And so, this week, we find ourselves challenged to stand against systems, leaders (political, economic, or religious) and structures in the name of justice, equality and peace. We may do this by speaking out, by using our vote, or by praying and living in ways that demonstrate the qualities of God's reign. But, we also find ourselves challenged to stand with those who are excluded, hurting, marginalised, stereotyped and oppressed. We can do this by working at grass roots level to meet the needs of those who struggle, by marching with those who protest injustice, by giving of our resources to help those in need, or by simply developing relationships with those who need to be welcomed. Naturally, both invitation and confrontation happen together – often simultaneously – and we cannot help but seek to find our peace in both modes of living out the Gospel. Grace, then, is not "soft" or "cheap". It is powerful and transforming if only we allow Jesus to teach us how to live it.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In every community and relationship there are times for invitation and welcome, and there are times for confrontation and holding people accountable. It is not ungracious to confront abusive spouses and hold them accountable. It is not ungracious to challenge those who mistreat their workers, or to confront those who stereotype or judge others because of insignificant differences. One of the strengths of the Wesleyan revival in England was that, in the class meetings, accountability and confrontation were built into the process of coming to Christ and joining the community. On the other hand, it is not a compromise to welcome those who have been excluded, those who are different, those who need love, direction, help, basic needs or a place to belong. It is not a compromise to put relationship above

law, and to stay faithful to relationships even when we disagree. The challenge of the Gospel is to learn, in our homes, our marriages, our churches and our neighbourhoods, to confront graciously and to welcome with integrity. We are called to sacrifice for others, to love others and to welcome others. And we are called to hold ourselves and our companions to the standards of justice and peace of God's reign. It is as we learn to allow others to hold us accountable, and as we learn to graciously challenge those with whom we journey, that we learn to live as citizens of God's reign. And it is as we forgive, include and seek to understand others that we discover the richness of God's grace and the power of God's reign to transform us in meaningful and healing ways. The question is whether we are willing to do the work and to face the tough realities of living in this invitational/confrontational community that God seeks for us.

SERMON OUTLINE 1

Matt 22:1-14 a wedding banquet for his son an analogy of Christ the bridegroom - *2'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son – the king being God the Father...*

1. The Invitation Refused 1-3: *3He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come – cf the response to the prophets..*

2. Repeated 4: The best of food had been prepared for the feast:- *“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.”* Who could refuse such an invitation?!!

3. Rejected 5-7: *5But they made light of it and went away – to worldly pursuits – and worse still: seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them – cf the treatment of John the Baptist, Stephen, James...*

4. Reissued 8-14: to those on *the streets v10 and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests > a happy outcome after all!*

Likewise, all are invited to share in *the kingdom of heaven..*

All went well at the wedding feast - except for 1 guest - *who was not wearing a wedding robe – worn on top of his own robes – showed no respect for the occasion/king/son – cf the reaction of Jewish religious leaders to Jesus..*

The man came on his own terms – in his own clothes – reflected his attitude to the great event – no sense of the occasion - the result? Banishment! **13**

The King said "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Norman Porteous

SERMON OUTLINE 2

Our gospel reading today is also about a banquet or feast. This is what Tom Wright has to say:

"Of course, when Jesus told the parable it had a particular point and focus. (It's possible that verse 7, the bit in brackets, was added later, perhaps by Matthew himself, so that his readers would make the connection between what Jesus was saying and the terrible events of AD 70. We shall see more about this when we get to chapter 24) The parable follows straight on from the devastating story of the wicked tenant farmers in chapter 21, and rams the point home. Everyone would know what a story about a landowner with a vineyard was referring to; equally everyone in Jesus' day would know the point of a story about a king throwing a wedding party for his son. (Jesus may well have told this kind of story several times; there's quite a different version of it in Luke 14.15-24.) This story is about the coming of God's kingdom, and in particular the arrival of the Messiah. Israel's leader in Jesus' day, and the many people who followed them, were like guests invited to a wedding—God's wedding party, the party he was throwing for his son. But they had refused, for the most part; think back to Jesus' sad warnings in 11.20-24. Now Jerusalem was refusing the invitation as well. God was planning the great party for which they had waited so long. The Messiah was here, and they didn't want to know. They abused and killed the prophets who had tried to tell them about it, and the result was that their city would be destroyed.

But now for the good news - though it wasn't good news for the people who were originally invited. God was sending out new messengers, to the wrong parts of town, to tell everyone and anyone to come to the party. And they came in droves. We don't have to look far in Matthew's gospel to see who they were. The tax-collectors, the prostitutes, the riff-raff, the nobodies, the blind and lame, the people who thought they'd been forgotten. They were thrilled that God's message was for them after all. His love reached them where they were, but his love refused to let them stay as they were. Love wants the best for the beloved. Their lives were transformed, healed, changed. Actually, nobody really believes that God wants everyone to stay exactly as they are. God loves serial killers and child-molesters; God loves ruthless and arrogant business men; God loves manipulative mothers who damage their children's emotions for life. But the point of God's love is that he wants them to change." And this shouldn't be seen as a threat or something unpleasant to be avoided. It is all good. Life can become an adventure in God's love, so we can experience the life in all its fullness promised by Jesus

and discover, like the psalmist that “goodness and mercy will follow all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” No wonder Paul tells us to “rejoice”. *Richard Ledger*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Day 1 By the former Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. i.e., the one closest to Harvard... at least geographically! On Matthew 22: 1 – 14. “There have been moments in listening to this story from the 22nd chapter of Matthew that I have wanted to simply stop, call a time out, and ask myself what is really going on here. The reason I say that is because the story sounds like something that I could guess the ending of. It's the kind of story where you think, "Oh, I know where this is going. This sounds good. I understand the point." But then halfway through it, it suddenly changes on you....

...Theologians and scholars can spend a great deal of time explaining all of this to us, but today, for my own sake, I'm simply going to sit here with you in an ambivalent moment in our reading and understanding of the Gospel. I'm simply going to call a time out and see if together we can understand what might really be happening in this strange story.

“And I believe I have a clue. What is happening is that we are dealing here with a powerful symbol. The wedding gown is a symbol that has been lost to us. It meant something to the readers and to the listeners of the time of Jesus who knew that a wedding gown implied the hospitality that was being extended and the respect and recognition that was due in return. That's been lost to us in our culture, where we are so informal that the idea of showing up without having the proper attire would not necessarily mean a one-way ticket to damnation.”

<http://day1.org/958-sermon-for-proper-23>

America - Leads in with, “Recently I watched “My Big Fat Greek Wedding,” a film filled with the exuberant joy of the human condition. It culminates in a wedding feast with steaming plates of food, much to drink and enthusiastic dancing...

and concludes, “All of us can thank God for the invitation to the eucharistic banquet given in baptism, which is an anticipation of the end-time feasting with God and the saints. Catholics today must also question their willingness to join all too gleefully in the “blame game.” The ongoing season of shame in the church has funded this game now vigorously played by all sides and often with a total lack of “goodness and kindness.” Unlike the sad man without a

proper garment, we still have time, but you never know when the final invitation will come.'

The customary short, informed, incisive style.

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2515

Excuses - This preacher lists the excuses various famous people could have made to reject the invitation to the banquet - from RL Stevenson and Mother Theresa to the disabled woman who started Meals on Wheels.

http://www.gerhardy.id.au/pent21_05.htm

Grace under pressure - on the Philippians passage by John O'Keefe, an Australian Lutheran pastor. Nice closing illustration on the peace which God gives.

http://www.ilp.org.au/spiritual_resources/sermons/.../pentecost22_12oct08.pdf

CHILDREN

Sermons4kids - Theme: Everyone is invited to God's celebration. **Object:** Party invitations, party hats and favors. Perhaps a cake to share with the children. **Scripture:** Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. Matthew 22:9-10 (NIV)

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/you-are-invited.html>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[The King Of Love My Shepherd Is](#)

[Praise, My Soul, The King Of Heaven](#)

[Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us](#)

[Come Sinners To The Gospel Feast](#)

[We Won't Stay Silent](#) (*Scroll down for links to preview, chord chart & song sheet*)

[Never Let My Hunger Die](#)

[You Are](#)

[Love And Justice](#)

[What Grace \(Father To You\)](#)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title