

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, RASTRICK

Welcome to Morning Worship and special service for the Rucksack Club

11th October 2020

*Click on the underlined links to take you to safe content on the internet.
If you are able light a candle as you start the service and if others are in the house encourage them to reading some of the service with you.*

[Opening Music](#)

Introduction

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We have come together in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.



Prayer of Penitence

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So, let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Together we pray:

**Lord God, we have sinned against you.
we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore to us the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#)

The Word of God - [Click Here](#)

First Reading: Isaiah 25:1-9 read by Pat Lee

Second Reading: Philippians 4: 1-9 read by Hilary Cartwright

Gospel reading: Matthew 22: 1-14 read by Roger Ellis

Reflection prepared by Rev Stephen Hannam

We live in very strange times when meeting with friends and relations is somewhat difficult to say the least.

These days a family get together is almost impossible. In church we are limited in numbers for Baptisms. Funerals are limited in church to 30 attendees. Who would have ever thought you could only attend a funeral by invitation! And weddings! Well gone for now are the open churches and the lavish receptions for as many as you want. We have to be sensible – and that's what we are doing! But not long ago and maybe not long in the future things were – and will be – different. Just as it was when Jesus told this story.

I guess if you have a son or daughter who is thinking about getting married maybe now is a good time to avoid all that expense!!!!

Wedding invitations to a “do” is what our story today is all about and in a way a stark contrast to the times we now live in. Jesus tells his story about a king who sent out invitations for his son's wedding reception. Now a wedding reception is a very special sort of party. Some receptions have to be seen to believe! – and the cost!!!!

Jesus tells his story – he says: - The invitations went out but all those who were invited invented excuses for not going. So instead the host invited everybody: - “Go into the streets and invite everyone you can find to the wedding feast!”

So what is Jesus getting at? I think Jesus wants us to know that heaven's like a huge family party. A party that everyone is invited to! The sad part is - not everyone is willing to take up the invitation. Maybe that's because they don't realise how wonderful it's going to be. I wonder do you know anyone who fits into that category?

So what reasons do some people give to not following Jesus?

Maybe you know someone who would say: - **“Well we're not religious.”**

But if you think about it that's not true. A person's religion is what binds their life together. By that I mean the principles they live by. If you like their priorities. You could say it's something to do with their conscience. Or maybe it's a get rich quick priority. I believe these aims are their religion. What they really mean is that they are not “Holy Joes” So I guess we must show them that we aren't either!

Or maybe some would say **“I don’t believe in God.”**

What do we do then? For sure arguing with them won’t do any good! But maybe sympathy might! Perhaps we could point out how sad it is that they miss all the comforts which belief in God can bring and perhaps the sense of purpose and direction which knowing God can bring.

Or maybe they would say:- **“I don’t believe in life after death.”**

In this case perhaps we could point out that whether they believe it or not God is offering it to them - but he is also offering them a freedom to turn it down. But remember how accepting it brings joy and hope and a comfort for those who mourn.

Then there is the old saying **“You don’t have to go to church to get to heaven!”**

I guess we can only agree to that! But maybe the question is:- if you don’t go to church what do you have to do? Maybe - be good? In that case there is no hope for anyone!! (We all fall short in that!) What the Bible says is that if you trust Jesus, God will promise you eternal life. But to do that you have to meet with Jesus – that is to know him and to be able to talk to him. Going to Church is simply there to make that easy!!

Since we have got to the church bit - what about the “Church?”

The church is supposed to be a foretaste of heaven and the church services are God’s family party! (Is that true?) Are you in the party mood? The invitation to the party is open to everyone, good, bad, rich, and poor alike. But everyone is free to turn it down and there is nothing we can do to make their minds up for them. But I do believe it is down to us to help people to understand what they are rejecting. That is – **the offer of a family to belong to in this life and the most unimaginable joy after they die.**

I believe we need to make the invitation clearer. We must make our services welcome and joyful as we can, so that those who come, or see our services online will want to know more. But it’s not about gimmicks or entertainment it’s about worship! That is very different to entertainment! That’s to do with all of us. It’s not just what church provides it’s about what we all bring to the services.

Perhaps it would be good to remind ourselves that when we talk about church, when others are around, we should avoid making negative comments about the shortcomings of the church or the world and concentrate on the wonderful things God has done and is doing in our lives. I think it’s important that we use all the opportunities we are given to sing God’s praise.

Remember it’s about: - God’s all-embracing love for all people. God’s generosity of the invitation - to live with him when our life on earth is done – and that is open to all.

I believe the parable today tells us all to:- Go and invite **everyone** to the wedding banquet! It's not up to us to make their minds up for them – the Holy Spirit will do that. Sadly, just as it was in the time of Jesus – some will reject the invitation. But don't be dishearten just hand them over to God in prayer.

Just for a moment imagine when we come into Church Jesus stands at the door to welcome us. What do you say to him?

Remember Jesus is here with us now.

Hymn: [The King is among us](#)

The Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession prepared by Margaret Ellis - [Click Here](#)

A Prayer for Church Growth

**God of Mission
Who along brings growth to your church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give
Vision to our planning
Wisdom to our actions
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

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 for ever. Amen.**

The Collect for today

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. Amen

Hymn: [You shall go out with joy](#)

Final Prayer

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

Our service ends with the Grace,
**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Especially for the Rucksack Club...

[How Great Thou art.](#)

Swedish folk melody arranged by Stuart Hine.

Played by John Keys (Traditional organ accompaniments Volume 8)