

Sunday, 28 August 2022

Proper 17 | Ordinary 22

 The Rev’d Andy Braunston

Opening Music

You might want to download and play *Vagabonds* written and performed by Stuart Townend. You can hear it here <https://tinyurl.com/yc68tszp> The Performing Rights Society grants a waiver for recorded music used in worship but if you livestream the service you will need to get a licence.

Call to Worship

Come, all you vagabonds, come all you ‘don’t belongs’, winners and losers,

come, people like me. **Come to the feast, there is room at the table.**

Come all you travellers tired from the journey, come wait a while, stay a while,

welcomed you’ll be. **Come to the feast, there is room at the table.**

Come all you questioners looking for answers, and searching for reasons

and sense in it all; **come to the feast, there is room at the table.**

Come all you fallen, and come all you broken, find strength for your body

and food for your soul. **Come to the feast, there is room at the table.**

Come to the feast, there is room at the table. Come let us meet in this place with the King of all kindness who welcomes us in, with the wonder of love, and the power of grace. **Come to the feast, there is room at the table.**

Prayers of Approach & Confession

Eternal One,

we give you thanks and praise

for the invitation you give to each of us to join you at the feast.

At your table we gather:

rich and poor, saint and sinner, old and young, healthy and frail,

black and white, women and men,

made in your image, loved to the core of our beings,

invited to feast with you and with each other,

as a sign of radical love and equality.

Yet we realise, O God,

we have swapped Your glory for that which does not last:

offered Your plenty, we turn our backs and wander into the wilderness;

offered Your richness we prefer the poverty of dark drought;

offered Your abundant blessings we defile our land.

We value that which has no real worth

and so we see ourselves as worthless;

lacking Your wisdom we choose politicians, priests, and princes

like cracked cisterns

that spill precious resources,

and there is no health in us.

Yet You, Eternal One,

raise the lowly,

invite to Your table those who can’t repay You,

reward the righteous,

and make all people welcome.

Forgive us when we turn away from You, and all You offer us;

forgive us, and give us time to change. Amen.

Words of Healing

The good Lord offers us healing, wholeness and welcome;

all are welcome to recline at His table,

to join with the outcast and feast with Him.

So turn from Your pride and fear,

embrace the One who runs to welcome you home.

You are forgiven; have the courage to forgive yourself. Amen.

All Age Ideas

You might want to show pictures of a party, a feast, a celebration meal and ask people when they last went to such an event, what they enjoyed about it, anything they didn’t like. You might ask if they were to throw a party who’d they’d invite – for youngsters ask if they’d only ask their friends or if they’d ask people at school they don’t like. For adults ask if they’d invite neighbours they didn’t like. Of course this might get a bit embarrassing, especially if they know what’s coming up in the reading, so make light of it! Explain it’s hard as we only want to invite people we like into our homes but Jesus tells us to be more generous, more hospitable than our comfort levels are used to. You might, if you feel like taking a risk, ask how people would feel with folk they don’t know in their home, or people they know but don’t like, or how they’d feel if people who were very different to them came in – of a different class, or outlook or folk who might be homeless and in desperate need. Explain they are in good company and the host at the meal we’re going to hear about today didn’t do these things and was treated to Jesus being a rather difficult guest at the meal!

Prayer for Illumination

Hear O people, listen for God’s word

in reading and sermon,

in song and silence,

in bread and wine,

in saint and sinner,

broken open for us, that we might live. Amen.

Readings

Jeremiah 2:4-13 | St Luke 14:1, 7-14

Ideas for a Sermon

Courts are always in the news. Judges make newsworthy decisions every day – whether that’s the crime page in the local paper or cases of constitutional importance that dominate the evening news and daily papers. You might want to mention newsworthy trials or court cases – as I write the European Court of Human Rights stopped the deportations to Rwanda pending the testing of that policy’s legality in the UK courts. People discuss cases, if the outcome is one they agree with so this might be a good starting place.

Today’s reading from Jeremiah, like many other passages in the Old Testament, sounds like God is in a court room as prosecutor with Israel in the dock. The words come from around 600 years before Jesus at a time when Jeremiah was urging the king, Josiah, to more fully follow God’s Law. The people and their leaders – princes and priests - had turned away from God and towards idols and so had, in Jeremiah’s view, defiled the land which had been given them by God. Preferring the new and the immediate, the people forgot the old and, in so doing, forgot God’s generous providing.

The feast which Jesus was invited allowed Him to reflect on God’s generous provision. In first Century Palestine the way folk ate was different than now as then folk lay on couches, head and upper body nearer the table, feet at the end of the couch away from the table. People might share a couch – so if you were lying on a couch up near the top table being asked to shift down was very embarrassing and left you and feeling shamed. Far better, says Jesus, to take a couch at the back and, if moved up, that’s a bonus.

Far more radical were Jesus’ words around who to invite as this invitation gives a glimpse of the Kingdom of God – where not just all are welcome - we like to sing that all are welcome but don’t often really mean it. Instead, Jesus gives some tangible examples about who should be invited. In the Kingdom all the normal social considerations are turned on their head; more Jesus tells us to act like this not to get a reward here as our invitations are returned but to seek to be seen as righteous in God’s eyes.

I wonder what our world would look like if we did this. What if our world gave a preferential option for the poor and excluded? What if our churches did? Might it mean not just saying we’re anti-racist but actively seeking out people of different ethnicities and making them welcome? Might it mean not just decrying the policies which lead to homelessness, not just supporting the work of those who work with the homeless, but making our churches welcoming places for the homeless. Might it mean not just wringing our hands at policies around refugees which break international law but actively helping refugees find safety and sanctuary in our churches and our society?

Offertory

God has blessed us in order that we may be a blessing to others; we’re not lavished with love and good things simply for our own good but that we might be channels of grace and blessing to others. We do this in many ways of course but we are called, to the best of our ability, to support the work of the Church. We give in the collection, we give by standing order direct to the church’s bank account, we give of our time and our talents as well as of our treasure and God, in great love and mercy, takes our gifts and uses them for good. So let’s pray:

God of all good things

take our humble offerings,

of money, of time, of talent,

and multiply them

that through our resources which we return to you,

our world may be changed. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world - which some seek to control, but which others view with despair - we declare with joy and trust: **our world belongs to God!**

From the beginning, through all the crises of our times, until His Kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever. **our world belongs to God!**

We rejoice in the goodness of God, renounce the works of darkness, and dedicate ourselves to holy living, for **our world belongs to God!**

As committed disciples, called to faithful obedience, and set free for joyful praise, we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in his world, for **our world belongs to God!**

With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended, we expect the Day of the Lord. And we are confident that the light which shines in the present darkness will fill the earth when Christ appears for **our World belongs to God!**

*From the Christian Reformed Church of America’s Our World Belongs to God*

Intercessions

*At the end of each prayer I will say “Lord, in your mercy” please respond with the words “hear our prayer”.*

Eternal One,

we thank you for your grace and favour to our forebears in distress,

for the ways you’ve guided and governed your people,

blessed us with life and love and liberty, called our church into being

and have sustained it in good times and in bad.

Help us to always remember your loving kindness, your blessings,

that we may be living containers of your life giving water,

not broken cisterns which are good for nothing but the museum.

Lord, in your mercy….**hear our prayer.**

God of the outcast,

we pray for those who are finding life difficult,

those who have fled home for fear or war, famine, persecution or poverty;

those waiting to come to the UK to re-join family and friends,

where their language skills give them a fighting chance of making a better life.

We remember those in immigration detention centres

waiting to see if the Law will protect them from deportation.

We pray for women in refuges,

waiting for justice and the chance to restart life in a safe way.

We pray for the homeless on our streets,

that we may find better ways to care for the vulnerable.

Lord, in your mercy…**hear our prayer**.

God of the Church

we pray for our congregations, that we may not only welcome all who come,

but seek out those to invite, that we become reflections of your Kingdom,

places of exciting diversity, places of liberating justice,

places where we see, in stranger and friend, the imprint of Your face.

Lord, in your mercy….**hear our prayer**.

God of the dispossessed and desperate,

we remember now in the silence of our hearts,

those who need our prayers and love,

those we know and those who are known only to You…

Lord, in your mercy…**hear our prayer**.

We join all our prayers together as we pray, with Jesus…

Our Father

Holy Communion

This is the Lord’s table. The Lord Jesus invites us to share this joyful feast. From east and west, from north and south, people will come and take their places at the banquet in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all who are weary and whose load is heavy; I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and you will find rest for your souls.’

Hear the words of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, according to St Paul:

The tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord himself: that on the night of his arrest the Lord Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God broke it and said: ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me.’

In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: ‘This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me.’ For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.

*1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26*

As the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, I take these elements of bread and wine, to be set apart from all common uses to this holy use and mystery; and as he gave thanks and blessed, let us draw near to God and offer him our prayers and thanksgiving.

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right to give you thanks and praise, O Lord, our God, sustainer of the universe.

At your command all things came to be.

By your will, the vast expanse of space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses,

and this fragile earth, our island home, were all created and have their being.

You brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill.

You made us the stewards of creation,

but we turned against you, and betrayed your trust.

Yet your mercy is like a spring that never fails.

You yourself, in Jesus Christ, come to deliver us: you redeem us in your love and pity;

you create new heavens and a new earth where the cry of distress is heard no more.

Therefore we praise you, joining with the heavenly chorus,

and with those in every generation who have looked to you in hope,

to proclaim with them your glory in their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

Gracious God, we recall the death of your Son, Jesus Christ,

we proclaim his resurrection and ascension, and we look with expectation

for his coming as Lord of all the nations.

We who have been redeemed by him, and made a new people by water and the Spirit,

now bring you these gifts.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon this bread and wine,

that we who eat and drink at this holy table may share the life of Christ our Lord.

Pour out your Spirit upon the whole earth and bring in your new creation.

Gather your Church together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom,

where peace and justice are revealed, that we, with all your people,

of every language, race, and nation, may share the banquet you have promised.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, all honour and glory are yours for ever. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

May our eyes which have seen God’s love;

be open to look for the glorious hope.

May our ears which have heard God’s songs;

be closed to clamour and dispute.

May our tongues which have uttered God’s praise;

be guarded to speak the truth in love.

May our hands have which have been raised in worship

stretch out to bring forth fruit for God’s glory.

May our feet which have walked in God’s courts;

be directed into light.

May our souls and bodies which have been fed by the Word of life;

serve the Eternal One with joy and gladness.

*Eucharistic Prayer and Post Communion Prayer adapted from the Church of Scotland’s Book of Common Order, Communion Service 1*

Blessing

May the One who

has bought you this far neither forsaking or ignoring you,

fills you with good things,

invites you to share your food with others,

enable you

to remember all that has been done for you,

to fill others with good things, and

to feed others that you might be considered righteous.

And the blessing of Almighty God,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be with you, now and always, Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

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| **Hymn** | **RS** | **StF** | **CH4** | **MP** |
| Here In This Place |  |  | 623 |  |
| Alleluia (Honduran Traditional Melody) |  |  | 753 |  |
| For Your Generous Providing |  |  | 655 |  |
| Shout for Joy the Lord Has Let Us Feast |  | 598 | 676 |  |
| I The Lord of Sea and Sky |  | 663 | 251 |  |
| Let Us Build A House / All Are Welcome (if you mean it!) |  | 409 | 198 |  |
| Come All You Vagabonds – sheet music, recording, and story behind the song here: https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/vagabonds/ |
| *Key:* *RS = Rejoice and Sing, StF = Singing the Faith, CH4 = Church Hymnary 4, MP = Mission Praise* |