

Dorset South & West Circuit.
Sunday October 11th 2026.
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.

Written Service.
You are invited.



Call to Worship. Isaiah 25:9

‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him, let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’

STF 102

For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:

*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light:

For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight:

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled:

For each perfect gift and sign
of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

Prayers of adoration and confession.

As you come to God in prayer take a moment to reflect on something that has caused you to smile in the past few days? Maybe something that is reflected in the words of the hymn?.....

.....Now let's bring our praise to our gracious God, who delights us each day with the wonders of the world we live in. Our senses are overwhelmed by the beauty around us. The sights that delight us, the sounds that bring us joy and the perfect gifts that we are given as signs of God's love and presence, each and every moment of our lives. Gracious God to thee we raise, this our grateful prayer of thanks and praise. **Amen**

Forgive us Gracious God for the many times we take you for granted. The times we allow ourselves to be distracted and not to notice the good things around us and be thankful. The times when we are not joyful or pure in heart. Rather we too easily get disgruntled by the minutest of things and spend time rather on those things that are not good for us. Forgive us and help us to really appreciate your love and to reflect that love to others. **Amen**

Bible reading: Matthew 22: 1-14,

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

‘Then he sent some more servants and said, “Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.”

‘But they paid no attention and went off one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, ill treated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

‘Then he said to his servants, “The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So 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, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

‘But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, “How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?” The man was speechless.

‘Then the king told the attendants, “Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ‘For many are invited, but few are chosen.’

Reflection.

What will the kingdom of heaven be like? Friends tell me, who know about my love of the sea, that the scripture’s say the sea will be no more. I counter that with the verse in Revelation 22 that says there will be a river of water, crystal clear and Psalm 46 says that there will be a river and it’s streams make glad the city of God. So plenty of waterscapes to keep me satisfied.

Seriously, what is your view of heaven? What do you hope it will be like? The kingdom of heaven will be a wonderful place, beyond our imagination. In our gospel reading Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven as like a kings wedding banquet for his son. A place of lavish joy and celebration.

We have all watched and seen the splendour of royal weddings. They are magnificent events where no expense is spared. The king in the parable is God our Heavenly Father and the son, Jesus Christ. What a lavish splendid banquet that we are all invited to. Did you get an invitation to any of the royal weddings? No, neither did I. Lost in the post perhaps 🙄 However we are all invited to the King of kings celebration in heaven.

Historically in biblical times, wedding invitations went out twice, first to name the day and for people to prepare. Then the servants were sent out with the final invitation to come, it’s ready. In a minuscule way, a little like when family meals are prepared, Mum might say, “dinner in half an hour.” Then a little bit later, Mum might ask someone to go and call everyone to the table it’s all ready. How awful when people don’t respond, they just want to finish what they’re doing or they have decided on other plans. The food goes cold or the one who has laboured to prepare everything sees everything go to waste.

In our gospel reading, the parable told is one of the most searching, unsettling, and ultimately hopeful pictures Jesus ever painted of the kingdom of heaven. It is a story in two halves, of those who are invited and do not come. And secondly the guests who come, but are not properly prepared. Let’s see what this parable has to say to us today?

Firstly, we are invited. Do you like getting invitations? Some we relish and we perhaps display the invitation on a mantelpiece or place of honour so we can keep looking at the invite and others too can see we have a very special invitation to a wonderful event. Some invitations are not so welcome, perhaps we know we have to go to some family event but there’s a dark cloud hanging over the meeting up with folks who we have a long standing disagreement with, or who just rub us up the wrong way. I think one of the toughest aspects of a wedding reception is the table seating plan. Who can we sit comfortably next to who? How sad that a joyous ceremony is often marred by such tensions.

Jesus says, “many are invited”. Will we be able to let go of old uncomfortable memories and enjoy being seated next to whoever in the kingdom of heaven’s banquet? What might stop us from accepting the invitation to the kingdom of heaven? What in our lives might make us refuse to accept Christ’s invitation? The parable refers initially to God’s chosen people, the house of Israel. The people of the covenant, the ones who had received the Law, the prophets, the promises. Again and again the servants (the prophets, and later the apostles) go out: “Everything is ready. Come!” And they refuse. Some are too busy with their own lives and businesses. Other’s actively try to get rid of the messengers by gruesome acts.

So this wonderful invitation is at first ignored and then when the second call goes out, they kill the messenger. I wonder if that’s where we get the old familiar saying that people use when giving someone a message that they don’t relish. “Don’t kill the messenger”.

We live in a crazy world where the majority of people are indifferent about matters of faith. Their agenda on life is more fulfilling, attractive and meaningful than anything that having an active faith in God can offer. But then they have the audacity to accuse God for all the wrong things that happen in life, they use his name to curse and swear and their angry reactions include anger against the God whose presence and invitation to faith they abjectly deny.

We are human, we sin, we get angry, we let ourselves and God down. However when we look again at the invitation he gives to us, an invitation that never fades and we turn to him, honestly, he forgives and forgets our failures. Of course there are many ways we get angry and many different ways we show or hide that anger. It’s hard to look at all the horrible things that happen in our lives and in the world and not to question God. I often quote that lovely prayer from the Iona community, that has the line in it; “when we kick God in the teeth, he is

concerned about whether we have stubbed our toes”. Unpacking that thought alongside the way the messengers in this parable are killed. It’s unthinkable that we would take any such actions. But is that how sometimes we treat God? We want things to be just how we want them. If we feel like it doesn’t go that way immediately then we get angry in all sorts of different ways.

This parable is full of passion and anger. The king is enraged and it seems scandalous that the story tells us that he destroyed their city and has his army committing murder! This is not the outburst of a petty tyrant; it is the righteous response of a holy King whose generosity has been despised and whose servants have been murdered. We can’t help but think about how Jesus’ crucifixion is what this story is alluding to. Jesus spent his life trying to get people to accept God’s invitation to his kingdom and his ways. In the end, they kill the messenger.

The second half of the story tells us the banquet is still ready. The King will have His hall filled. So He sends the servants out to the street corners, to the highways and byways, to invite anyone they find: the bad as well as the good. Now those who never expected an invitation are welcomed. Except for the one person in the gospel story who doesn’t have a wedding garment. He is tied up and thrown out! That sounds a bit harsh. Did you notice he’s only speaking of one man? Apparently, everybody else had a change of clothes. In any culture you come to a wedding having made a little bit of effort to look respectable. The issue is he presumed that he could just come into the wedding feast on his own terms and that it was good enough that he had come. It seems like an insult to the king of kings. It was to think two things, firstly I’m not in the presence of greatness and secondly In my opinion I am good enough, I don’t need to change. That’s what Jesus’ teaching is all about. It’s what John the Baptists message was about as he prepared the way for Jesus. We need to recognise who God is and what his ways are and repent of our sins. Put off our unrighteousness and clothe ourselves in His righteousness.

Jesus called us all to the gospel feast, but hearing the call is not enough. It demands the right response and action from all. We are called and that invitation doesn’t mean we have to prove ourselves to be righteous. We are called to come as we are but to be prepared to be changed.

So what will the kingdom of heaven be like? Who will you be sitting next to, what will you be wearing? Will you be there? We need to receive the invitation and not let anything distract us from accepting it. We need to examine our dress. Are we trusting in our own goodness, our church attendance, our moral efforts? Or have we put on Christ by faith? Then we need to rejoice in the wideness of God’s mercy. The wedding hall is filled with people who never expected to be there. Finally, we need to live as those who have been chosen. If you are clothed in Christ, then live as a guest at the King’s table, grateful, joyful, holy, and eager for others to join the feast. The King has prepared the wedding banquet in the kingdom of heaven. The Son is the Bridegroom. The invitation still stands. Will you come? And will you come clothed only in Him?

STF 663

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Prayers of Intercession : Think about ripples on a pond as a stone is thrown into it.

Let us pray for those nearest and dearest to us. Those at the centre of our lives? We pray for any in any special time of need. For those who are ill or bereaved.

Let us pray for those in our community. Our church and the places where we socialise and connect with others.

We pray for any challenges facing those places that enliven and enrich us.

Let us pray for our nation. We think about the things we have read in the newspapers or heard about in the media. We pray for those who are struggling with the difficulties of living. For those who are our caregivers and who have positions of power and responsibility in our country.

Finally we pray for those furthest away from us. Those who live in troubled lands either because of warfare or facing unnatural disasters. We pray for peace and healing in our needy world.

We unite our prayers in the words of **the Lord's Prayer**.

STF 692

Your hand, O God, has guided
your flock, from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written,
full clear, on every page;
our forebears owned your goodness,
and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness:
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

Your heralds brought glad tidings
to greatest, as to least;
they summoned all to hasten
and share the great King's feast;

their gospel of redemption,
sin pardoned, right restored,
was all in this enfolded:
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

Your mercy will not fail us,
nor leave your work undone;
with your right hand to help us,
the victory shall be won;
and then, by all creation,
your name shall be adored,
and this shall be our anthem:
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

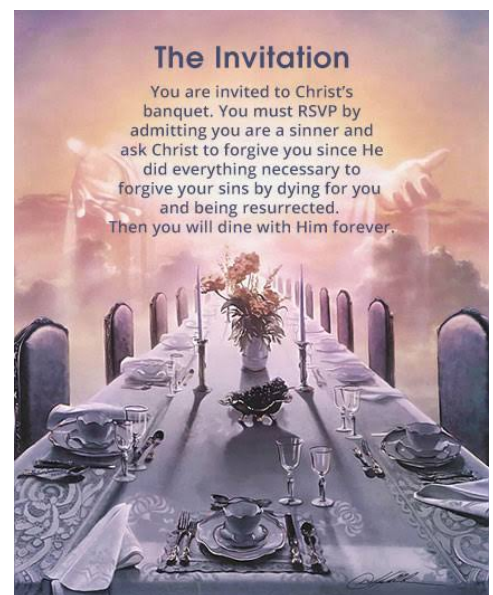
The Blessing

May the blessing of God, Creator and Sustainer, surround you through this day.

May the love of Christ, Redeemer and Saviour, comfort you through this day.

May the Holy Spirit, in the unity of the Three, support you through this day. **Amen.**

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The Invitation

You are invited to Christ's banquet. You must RSVP by admitting you are a sinner and ask Christ to forgive you since He did everything necessary to forgive your sins by dying for you and being resurrected. Then you will dine with Him forever.