



Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed

*during the week beginning
Sunday, 11th October*

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

Last Saturday our Families@Five service focused on the importance of giving thanks. We read from the Gospel of Luke (17: 11-19) the account of the ten lepers and the one Samaritan leper, who when he saw that he was healed by Jesus, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. Imagine the difference between being afflicted with leprosy and being miraculously cured from this incurable condition. Imagine not saying thank you to God or thank you to Jesus for making this miracle possible.

For most of 2020, we have lived restricted lives, initially retreating to our homes for extended periods, fearful of the transmission of the coronavirus. We have been waiting for a miracle vaccine or cure for this devastating disease that has killed more than a million people around the world and shattered the lives and livelihoods of tens of millions more people. We have given up waiting to go back to "normal". We just want to stop the sickness and the deaths, and the lives ruined, and the poverty that is escalating throughout the world, particularly our third world countries. Our prayers are unceasing as we cry out to God for an end to this pandemic for all people.

What will our response be when we are finally able to be vaccinated, and even better, to be cured from this horrendous disease. Will we give the creator of the universe the glory for our miracle cure, whenever it is available, and will we pray as many thank you's as we have prayed for vaccines and cures and a return to some form of normality of life?

The story of the ten lepers is sobering as we anticipate a future without COVID-19. May we always remember to give God the glory for the great and marvellous wonders that will change our lives for the better. And in the meantime, while we wait for an end to COVID-19, what are the things we can be thankful for, even in this time of our restricted lives?

Families@Five is on the first Saturday of the month at 5.00pm at the Cathedral.

**Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer continue to be streamed every day,
and Holy Communion at the Cathedral is streamed on Sundays and Wednesdays:**

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

**Eucharists are offered at Christ Church Cathedral on Sundays at 8.00am and 11.00am,
and Monday to Friday at 8.30am (following Morning Prayer).**

Eucharists are also offered at St Peter's Hamilton at 11.00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 32: 1-14

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mould, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.” They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation. ”But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Psalm 106: 1-6, 20-24

1 Praise the Lord, O give thanks to the Lord for he is good:
and his mercy endures for ever.

2 Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord:
or fully voice his praise?

3 Blessed are those who act according to justice:
who at all times do the right.

4 Remember me O Lord
when you visit your people with your favour:
and come to me also with your salvation,

5 That I may see the prosperity of your chosen:
that I may rejoice with the rejoicing of your people
and exult with those who are your own.

6 We have sinned like our ancestors:
we have acted perversely and done wrong.

20 At Horeb they made themselves a calf:
and bowed down in worship to an image.

21 And so they exchanged the glory of God:
for the likeness of an ox that eats hay.

22 They forgot God who was their saviour:
that had done such great things in Egypt,

23 Who had worked his wonders in the land of Ham:
and his terrible deeds at the Red Sea.

24 Therefore he thought to destroy them:
had not Moses his servant stood before him in the breach
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Philippians 4

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

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Matthew 22: 1-14

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 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.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' 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. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 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.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Reflection on a page by *The Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer*

This parable of the Wedding Banquet, which we hear this weekend, is a parable which speaks of inclusion, of outreach and hospitality. Everyone is brought into the wedding banquet, both the good and the bad. But in this version of the parable, in Matthew's Gospel, we have an ending which unsettles us, one in which there is outer darkness, and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Not quite the ending we expected.

So what is it in this parable which disquiets us so? A king holds a wedding banquet for his son – an allegory of the kingdom of heaven. When the time comes for the banqueting, the realisation of the expected and anticipated wedding, and despite renewed personal invitation, excuses are made, and, like last week's gospel about the tenants in the vineyard, some of the messengers encounter violence and death. The king's retribution is swift, but so also is a response of abundant generosity, which gathers all into the banquet. And then we have the incident of the guest without the robe, who is cast out, deemed not to be amongst the chosen.

In many ways, this parable is like the parables we heard several months ago, of the sower and the seeds and the different soils, and the wheat and the weeds, and another parable which we didn't read on a Sunday morning, but sits with these parables, of a net cast into the water, which catches all manner of fish. These too are parables of inclusion, of recognizing that all are called, all are welcome – but equally with a disturbing edge. That edge is around how we respond to God's generosity and invitation. There is a call to change, to receptivity, to repentance, which allows joy and new life to flourish. These parables are about a difference being made in our lives, through grace, through faith.

So too, is this parable of the wedding banquet. Like the parable of the ungrateful servant a few weeks ago, who had his debt forgiven, yet did not forgive the debt of another, thus showing that his life remained unchanged by the master's generous grace, some scholars suggest that the end of this parable is about the same sort of thing. Thomas G. Long in his commentary on Matthew suggests that the reason the guest receives attention is because he is not behaving as a guest at a wedding banquet should. Long argues that that these guests which had been brought in from the streets could hardly have been expected to have a wedding garment with them, and that what the guest has failed to put on is a difference in his actions because he is at the banquet. He stands out, as it were, because he is not acting as a guest at a wedding should act. Being invited, being drawn into the abundance and generosity of the banquet hasn't made a change in his life.

St Paul, writing to the Philippians talks about the change that believing in Christ, and being part of a community which believes in Christ, makes in the difference of the lives of those who are part of that community. He begins this chapter by urging the church as a whole to help two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to resolve a dispute – they are not criticized but rather recognized along with Clement, for the work they have done and do in the Church. Further in this reading for today, Paul urges the church as a whole, “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. ⁹Keep 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.” He urges to keep doing what they have been doing, to focus on the things which are true and right, to “keep doing the things that you have learned and received”, to keep showing the difference that believing and being part of the community makes in their lives.

How do we translate this to our lives, especially in a pandemic? By still doing the things which show the difference Christ makes in our lives. The little things as well as the large – the phone call, the visit, the card, the gift, the listening ear, the prayers – which show faith in action. And through this, we encourage others to likewise, come and live differently.

Readings for next week – The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 33:12-23

Psalms 99

1 Thess. 1:1-10

Matthew 22: 15-33



Prayers for use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and
distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and
fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Please do not hesitate to contact Dean Katherine or Reverend Angela if you have any concerns at this time and if you would like for us to visit you at home.

Parish office: (02) 4929 2052 or cathedral@newcastlecathedral.org.au

Dean Katherine: 0407 201 693 or katherinebowyer@newcastleanglican.org.au

Reverend Angela: 0400 076 515 or revangela.peverell@newcastlecathedral.org.au