2026 10 11 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,
On we go into the Autumn – though we have been lucky with the weather so far. This week, as we gather to look at the theme of banquet and feast, there is an open invitation to all to come and share in the banquet of good things that God has given us. Matthew's gospel does, however, also contain a warning of the danger of resisting God's efforts to bring about a peaceful world where all nations feast together with God, as Isaiah wrote about: 'The Lord All-Powerful will give a feast for all people.... At the feast, there will be best food and wines. The meat will be good and tender, the wine pure and clear... Death will be destroyed forever, and the Lord God will wipe away every tear from every face. In the past, his people were sad, but God will take away all that sadness from the earth.' Every blessing to each of you, Margaret.

Call to Worship: Rejoice in the Lord always for he is near. Rejoice!

Lord, your goodness and love have surrounded us all the days of our lives. We gather at your invitation to rejoice in you – to bring our concerns to you – and to know your peace. Amen.
All-knowing God – if we have come to you today clothes in despondency – bless us with peace.
If we have come clothes with anxiety – bless us with peace.
If we have come clothes in half-heartedness – bless us with desire.
If we have come clothes with resentment – bless us with grace.
If we have come clothes in distractedness – bless us with focus.
If we have come clothes in failure – bless us with confidence.
If we have come clothes in complacency – bless us with urgency.
We ask all this so that we may worship you with the best of all we have and are – in Jesus' name. Amen.

The words to 'Come sinners to the gospel feast' written by Charles Wesley [1707-1788] StF 401
1 Come, sinners, to the gospel feast, let every soul be Jesu's guest;
you need not one be left behind, for God has called all humankind.

2 Sent by my Lord, on you I call, the invitation is to all;
come, all the world and witness how all things in Christ are ready now.

3 Come, all you souls by sin oppressed, you restless wanderers after rest,
you poor, and maimed, and sick and blind, in Christ a hearty welcome find.

4 His love is mighty to compel; his conquering love consent to feel;
yield to his love's resistless power, and fight against your God no more.

5 See him set forth before your eyes; behold the bleeding sacrifice!
His offered benefits embrace, and freely now be saved by grace.

6 This is the time; no more delay! This is the Lord's accepted day;
come in, this moment, at his call, and live for him who died for all.

Prayer including Lord's Prayer:
Generous God,
We kneel in awe at your willingness to draw us into your fellowship – in wonder at your gracious invitation to join the feast of life – in gratitude at your care for each one of us – in humility for your faithfulness towards each one of us.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we kneel and worship and adore you. Amen.

Gracious God, you invite us to join you in caring for the vulnerable, and we hurt you when we do not accept your invitation – and we are sorry, Lord.
You invite us to share the good news of your love, and we hurt you when we do not accept your invitation. We are sorry, Lord, forgive us.
You invite us to clothe ourselves with compassion and humility – and we hurt you when we do not accept your invitation – and we are sorry, Lord.
You invite us to take our place at your table – and we hurt you when we do not accept your invitation. We are sorry, and we ask your forgiveness in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eternal God, you clothe us with forgiveness – you cover us with your grace – you robe us with your generosity – you root us in your faithfulness – you gather us in your love – and you invite us to be your disciples. You go all out to draw us in and you call each of us by name.
We thank you, wonderful God, for the gift of life – for the opportunities of life – for the invitations to flourish in life.
May we be as whole-hearted as you in all we do – as generous as you in all we give – as daring as you in all we dream – and as faithful as you in all our relationships. Thank you, Lord, for everything. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 22: 1-14 taken from The New Testament [a New Translation]. Copyright William Barclay 1968.
Once again Jesus spoke to them in parables. 'The situation in the Kingdom of Heaven,' he said, 'is like the situation which arose when the king gave a wedding banquet for his son.
He sent out his servants to tell the guests – who had already received their invitations to the banquet – to come, and they refused to come.
He sent out a second lot of servants. "Tell those who have been invited," that I have completed the preparations for the dinner I am giving. My oxen and specially fattened calves have been killed. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet."
They completely disregarded the invitation and went off, one to his farm and another to his business. The others seized the servants, wantonly ill-treated them and killed them. The king was furious and sent his troops and wiped out those murderers and burned their town.
Then he said to the servants: "The wedding banquet is all ready, but those who received invitations to it did not deserve them. Go out to the open roads and invite everyone you meet to the banquet."
So the servants went out to the roads and collected everyone they met, good and bad alike, and so the room where the wedding banquet was to be held was filled with guests.
When the king came in to look at the guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes.
"Friend," he said to him, "why have you come like this, without wedding clothes?" The man had nothing to say.
Then the king said to the attendants: "Tie him up, hand and foot, and fling him out into the outer darkness."
There will be tears and agony there. For many are invited but few are chosen.'

Meditation of a listener to Jesus' parable of the banquet: taken from *A Most Amazing <Man – year A*. Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett.
It troubles me, that parable of his, about many being called but few chosen, for which am I: the first or the last?
I can't quite grasp whether it's about promise or threat, reassurance or warning.

For one moment everyone was invited to the banquet, good or bad, and the next this poor guy was singled out and thrown into the darkness, simply for not wearing the right outfit!
What does it mean? And does it mean *me?*
I know this at least, that God has called and I want to respond – that his people, in time, will feast in his kingdom – and I want to be among their number.
But will I pass the test or be found wanting – be deemed a guest or an impostor?
Wait! I get it now!
It's not simply about turning up for the party but truly sharing in the occasion; about getting into the mood, responding with body, heart and soul.
That poor man they carted off – he just followed the crowd, having no idea what he was getting or why.
And, when it comes to God, you can't do that, copying what *others* do. It has to be *your* decision showing itself in *your* life.
He wants you to put on what he provides – clothes of righteousness, pleasing in his sight; to seek after what is true, just, pure and commendable – and to think always on such things.
Strive to make those your own and, rest assured, you will be *his* own, welcomed at his table.
Not just called but *chosen*.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for inviting us to taste your love and receive your mercy.
Thank you for preparing a table for us in your Father's house at which, one day, we may sit and share with you for all eternity.
Help us to respond, not passing the opportunity by, but signifying our desire to celebrate with you.
And help us to do so, not because others are doing the same, or because it's expected of us, or out of idle curiosity, but joyfully receiving what you so freely offer.
Teach us that when *we* make *our* choice, *you* make *yours.* Amen [Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett]

Lord, you sent your Son not to condemn, but to redeem, so we pray:
For all who reject your loving invitation – turn their hearts.
For all who trust in their own self-righteousness – open their eyes.
For any who consider themselves beyond redemption & are lost in despair – dispel their darkness.
For those who are seeking & searching for meaning & faith – show them the way home.
Finally, we pray for ourselves, that we may not be stumbling blocks to another's journey of faith, but rather encourage them to respond with joy to you. Amen.

Close:
We give you thanks, wonderful God, for the gift of life – for the opportunities of life – for the invitations to flourish in life. May we be as wholehearted as you in all we do – as generous as you in all we give – as daring as you in all we dream – and as faithful as you in all our relationships. Amen.

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