

Welcome

Welcome once again to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church, whether you're here in the church, watching live at home, watching the later recording or following the script. Though it's difficult to be separated as we are, still we assert that we are all united and we intend that everyone should feel both the truth of that and the warmth of today's welcome.

Again, the reminder for those in church that there can be no standing or singing (apart from under your breath) thank you for following the COVID 19 rules and layout as you arrived – and please follow the one way system & the steward's directions as you leave - thanks to them for preparing and operating all these procedures; they, in turn, I know, appreciate your support.

Today's service continues to follow the 'lectionary' set readings that are being used widely across the churches in this country. This is the final period of the Christian year, before it begins again at Advent. Although significant themes lie ahead – Remembrance, Christ the King – in these several weeks we are directed to some of the material that provides a challenging atmosphere for the whole gospel story – the story of Jesus. The material suits this challenging time.

CG 38 'Gather us in'.

Mike Garnier

Call to worship

Whoever we are – young, old, rich, poor - we are invited and welcome here. However we are – nervous, relaxed, faith-filled, full of questions – we are called here, and here we can be assured that we are in God's presence – it is His promise to us in Christ – in whose name, we worship

BPW 374 "[God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him](#)"

Opening Prayer

God is love – God *of* love, we worship you; God *who loves*, we worship you – God *who is love* we worship you; we acknowledge that nothing about you is *not* love – and we worship you;

Your power is the power of love – and we worship you; your peace is the wholeness of love – and we worship you – your holiness is the holiness of love – and we worship you

And you love us in Christ with a love that knows no end; and you save us in Christ with a saving love that reaches us where we are; and you keep us in Christ, and hold us with a love that can never be overcome – and we worship you

And we have not loved much; forgive us; our love has been partial and blown about by feelings and the winds of change – forgive us; we have struggled to love those we do not know, or like, or understand – forgive us (pause) – we wait on your word..

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Thanks be to God; now, Lord, as you continue to pour your love out upon us and on the world, help us once more to love you and lead us to love the world in the name of your Son

Lord's Prayer:

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 forever. Amen

['All Around'](#)

Tollington Gospel Choir

Sermon

'For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Lord, we give you this time. May what is spoken ring with truth, may what is heard and understood be touched by your spirit, and may what is decided lead us on towards your Kingdom. Amen.

Apparently some Manchester students have been holding 'COVID 19 positive' parties; if you've got a positive result you can come, if it's negative..sorry.. They've been stopped now.

Spare a thought for anyone organising a wedding ATM (there's one here in a few weeks.)

They'd been planning for 30, now it's 15. After the bride & groom, best man, bridesmaids, parents, pastor, photographer, favourite aunt, you're up to 10,11,12, *then* who do you invite?

The next 'harsh parable of Jesus' in Matt – told in the stressful, dark time at the end of Jesus's ministry, as opposition builds and the final tragic events come near - is about a wedding – a reception really – and the whole event, is, says Jesus, like God's Kingdom.

A happy wedding reception, a banquet, groaning with food, drink, everyone dressed up to the nines, having a good time – you know how it is with wedding receptions – P Larkin describes fathers having 'never known success so huge'

that's how we've tended to picture the Kingdom recently haven't we? I have, anyway - often talked about God's Kingdom as being a glorious, happy, peaceful, just, loving place. Talked mostly about *inviting*

I think much of today's church comes down to this – *inviting*.. It's not just me - 'All are welcome in this place' we sing –

the ministry & mission of the church, from traditional places like this, to churches on business parks, to megachurches in the US with TV stations & free parking for 5000 cars –

to little village churches with bright signs showing that they're still open despite appearances

To Youtube - choirs, preachers, sunsets, rainbows, green hills, flowing seas, cute lambs, cats & dogs

Rachel, bless her, does a sterling job finding pieces that aren't too schmaltzy; Ian does a sterling job adding pictures or changing pictures,

But there's no getting round it – we want people to come, to hear about God's love & we want the lonely & vulnerable to know that they're invited into God's Kingdom

We're probably most familiar with Luke's version of the story –

Go out into the streets & lanes & bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, & the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done & there is still room." Then the master said "Go out into the roads & lanes & compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.

But even though Luke's and Matthew's version differ they both include the parable of Jesus so as to do something else than just to emphasise the *invitation* of God's Kingdom.

It's summed up best in the final verse of Matthew's - *For many are called, but few are chosen*

See; it's not all about us, it's about God – God, remember, is the God of 'I am who I am'. The God who, in the story of the golden calf, was angry..

Frankly, we struggle with this – to know how, in the 21st century, in the midst of a pandemic that's brought so much suffering, we could possibly speak about an angry God –

& probably – quite rightly, after the report of the Historic Child Abuse enquiry into the C of E – we don't think we've got any moral right to speak about an angry God.

If we do we can't help sounding judgmental, narrow-minded, old-fashioned, hypocritical –

& if it was all about *us* it would be – either *just* an invitation or *just* a condemnation – but, the parable lodges deep in the heart of the gospel story *both and makes it all about God*

The parable *is* harsh. Slaves killed, murderers destroyed, cities burned, the King *angry*.
 No wonder; he's laid on a great banquet, he's sent out the invitations – and one by one they've refused to come; they're too busy; they're too preoccupied with their own affairs –
 And if the judgment seems harsh (it was a harsh time) that just goes to show how deep and full and complete and all-encompassing is the life of God's Kingdom –
 You could say that in the economy of God *nothing* compares with his Kingdom – nothing else is of value – not even the world and all it has to offer –
 The world's billionaires have prospered mightily during this pandemic – their wealth has increased thirty fold – personal fortunes greater than the GDP of countries like New Zealand..
 All that wealth is *as nothing* compared to God's Kingdom. Moses condemned idolatry not because he didn't like glitzy statues but because it was worship of something other than God
 Like Paul – 'they worshipped created things rather than the creator'..an angry God? God has given everything and we'd rather be busy with our own affairs – an angry God? You betcha!
 But this isn't just about any old invitation; it's about *God's* invitation – he wants you, me, *anyone* to come into his Kingdom –
 One of modern Christianity's great failings is it spends all its time trying to decide who to invite, what they have to be like to get invited –
 It's not always conscious, but at various times & in various places, no matter what the church has tried to say, poor people haven't felt welcome, black people haven't felt welcome, gay people haven't felt welcome, women haven't felt welcome –
 But everyone's welcome – everyone's invited, we should say..
 But..(did you feel a but coming?) In Matthew's version the guest wasn't wearing a wedding robe. It's a bit difficult all this, but it looks as if the wedding robe stands for..
 robes of righteousness? Last week, - fruits of the Kingdom - ? justice? Peace? Care of creation? Feeding the hungry? Clothing the naked? – Love, joy, peace, gentleness, faithfulness..etc, etc
 And what happens to the guest who isn't wearing one? Outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.. Somebody said the problem with today's Christianity is that it's all too *nice*..
 This suffering world doesn't need *nice*; it's a loveless world and it needs *love*; it's a dishonest world and it needs *truth*; it's a dark world and it needs *light*
 And it needs people who will hold out God's invitation – and who discover that once you're at the banquet (in Gods Kingdom) you have to live as God wants you to live and joyfully discover that all the time you were thinking you had responded to the invitation,
 really it was God.. always, in Christ, it is God.. for many are called (invited?) but few are chosen

BPW 358 ['Take my life and let it be'](#)

NBA Big Sing, Westgate Baptist Church, Newcastle upon Tyne

Prayers

We pray for all those we know who we can't see and can't touch ATM – families and friends, in other parts of the world, other parts of the country. Lord, please hold what we cannot hold, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are trying to keep businesses going, in hospitality, entertainment, commerce and industry; charities and services. Lord, please keep what we cannot keep, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are facing unemployment – coming to the end of furlough, looking forlornly for another job, desperately trying to make ends meet. Lord, please provide what our world struggles to provide, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are finding it hard to cope with isolation, frustrated at new restrictions, forced to wait for essential treatment. Lord please bring peace where we have failed to bring peace, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for people with disabilities and conditions that make social distancing and mask-wearing harder if not impossible. Lord please heal what we cannot heal, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those charged with making hard decisions and those who advise them. Lord, please bring wisdom where our wisdom gives out, by your love

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for ourselves. Lord, change us, make us more loving, make us more kind, and wise, and ready to go, and do, and give, of the love in which we believe – the love that comes from you – and show us again, we ask, that you love us and our world.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We make these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus, Amen

Offering

As we prepare to make our offering (perhaps you'll leave your gift in the plate on the way out), we pray:

Lord, we are grateful for all we have received. Even in these difficult times we would be thankful, for life itself with all its mix of challenges and joys – and as we offer ourselves in these and all our gifts we ask that others, too, might discover your goodness and imbibe the spirit of gratitude

The Grace is said:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

CG 121 'The peace of the earth'

Tyndale Virtual Singing Group

Blessing

The blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us, evermore

Thanks to Rachel M, Sarah D, the Tyndale Singers and Mike Garnier for the recorded music, to Denise and Graham for the readings and to Nick and Tina for getting the script in the post. Thanks to today's stewards and 'preparers' and thanks to you all for being here this morning.

A 'together though apart' time follows at 11.30 am