

# Stokesley Methodist Church



Sunday 15th October, 2017

## Welcome to Worship

10.30am Morning Worship led by Arthur Noble  
4.00pm Churches Together Songs of Praise  
at St Joseph's RC Church  
6.00pm Town Close with Christine Campy

### A Gathering Prayer from the Roots Resources

Loving God, you gather us together tenderly as a shepherd gathers their sheep; you bring us together to feed us and to strengthen us with your living water.

In you we find peace.

Help us to accept the invitation to come to you; make us willing to respond to your call, and ready to receive you now.

To you we come, Father, for you are a refuge for the poor.

We draw near with our concerns, for you are a refuge for the needy in their distress.

In you we pause and rest, for you are a shelter from the storm, and a shade from the heat.

It is to you that we offer our worship today. **Amen.**

### Lectionary Readings:

**Exodus 32 v1-14** The Golden Calf

*"But Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God ... Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened."*

**Psalm 106 v1-6; 19-23**

*"At Horeb they made a calf and worshipped an idol cast from metal ... They forgot the God who saved them ... So he said he would destroy them – had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them."*

**Philippians 4 v1-9** Exhortations

*"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."*

**Matthew 22 v1-14** The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

*"For many are invited, but few are chosen."*

### Ready To Party

In this week's reading from Matthew we hear Jesus telling a story in which invitations are sent out for a wedding banquet. The invited guests find excuses not to come, so others are invited in their place. A man is thrown out because he is not dressed appropriately.

Jesus gives his audience yet another parable. This one is explicitly set at the wedding of a king's son & to celebrate the marriage, a banquet is given by the king. In a world when time was less precise than it is today, invitations are sent out. Then, when everything is ready, the guests are summoned. But, despite the importance of the occasion, the guests make excuses, and, worse still, the violence of the situation escalates. The consequence is

that the guest list is ‘universalised’ – everyone who can be found is invited. The metaphor is clear: the original guests are God’s people, Israel, invited to God’s heavenly banquet; and the judgement is on Israel, because the party goes on, but with different guests.

But there is a problem. One of the ‘replacement’ guests, called in from the street at the last minute, is not properly dressed. Is it reasonable to expect that a casually invited guest will be correctly attired? Jesus’ hearers, then and now, will not be surprised that the guest was speechless to be challenged in this way! But this is a parable, a story, not a factual account.

So, what is to be made of this improperly dressed guest? ‘Wedding clothes’ may suggest a specific – and newly bought – outfit, but in Jesus’ day this would not have been an option. Wedding guests would wear their best clean clothes. This man, rather than nipping home to change, has just wandered in, unchanged. The man is ejected because he will not change; he assumes that he has no obligation other than to show up. Again, the meaning is clear: the wedding garment is a metaphor for righteousness; all are invited to God’s banquet, but not all are necessarily righteous. While some may interpret this to mean that God grants the gift of salvation to some, but withholds it from others, the choice – whether to change or not – actually rests with the invited guest.

It is worth remembering that in the Early Church, baptism involved removing clothes, being immersed in water and then re-clothed, to symbolise putting on a new life in Christ.

The simple link that runs through our readings from Philippians & Matthew’s Gospel is that knowing God can never leave us unchanged. To encounter God will always affect and change the way we are, and the things we do. The problem in Matthew is that

the first group of guests (and the guest later excluded) remain unmoved – and therefore unchanged – by the anticipation of the banquet.

Intention is a word that means you decide to do something or plan to get a certain result, for example, you might decide to read a certain book; you intend to read and finish that book.

Sometimes we have good intentions, but we don’t follow through and complete the task. Perhaps you did not finish that book you meant to read because you were distracted by something else instead.

This story is about intentions. People were invited, but when it was time to come to the party, the people who had been invited had other plans and did not come. They may have had good intentions, but they chose to do other things.

The lesson this story teaches us is that we all are invited to be a member of God’s family. When we become a Christian & join God’s family, we have good intentions to honour God and be of service to others, but often we get too involved with other things and sometimes we simply forget.

This story reminds us that good intentions are only good if we follow through and complete the task. We must remember to honour God every day and share God’s love with others through our words and deeds.

### **A Sending Out Prayer**

May God’s goodness strengthen you.

May God’s mercy comfort you.

May God’s promise of eternal life inspire you with hope and love.  
In the name of the Father, Son and Spirit.

**Amen.**