



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
18th Sunday after Trinity – Sermon for 10.00am 11 October 2020
Bible Readings: Philippians 4: 1-9 & St Matthew 22: 1-14
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Living in peace will mean different things to different people: to be topical, it can be the freedom to exercise our vote even if the ballot paper seemed a mile long! Or, perhaps, peace is the tranquillity found in natural beauty; for sure, it's the absence of war; and, I imagine for parents, peace is when their children are safely tucked up in bed fast asleep! To appreciate living within Christ's peace it's first, necessary to consider the bleak alternative.

Paul's letter reaches the church in Philippi, where there is an evident lack of peace between fellow workers Euodia and Syntyche. He urges the whole church to help them be of the same mind in Christ. They were not unique in having differences of opinion for, even Paul and his early champion Barnabas reconciled to go their separate ways. And those who wrote the Gospels perceived things differently but none-the-less all help us to understand that they wrote about real people: real disciples of Christ.

St Luke's writings are humorous, poignant and winsome. Matthew, on the other hand, draws on his knowledge of Jewish genealogy setting Christ's lineage and ministry within that context. No one, however, could call today's gospel humorous or winsome, in fact, it's bleak. In it, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a king hosting a wedding banquet for his Son. Heaven, however, is not the focus so much as the reaction of those who choose to refuse God's loving invitation. Jesus' parable illustrates what living without his Peace is like.

There are those people so self-absorbed in their own world and self-belief that even when the king gives them a second chance to accept his invitation, they ignore it. If they are moved at all, it is to attempt to remove the challenge of the invitation by killing the messengers. And what about the wedding guest chastised for not wearing a wedding garment? As the king is generous beyond measure, had the guest merely lacked material clothing doubtless his need would have been supplied. The garment that was missing was the cloak of gratitude of heart and mind. Such people are those who think they are entitled to take what they can from life and faith believing it is their birthright.

Jesus' conveys to his listeners how God sent his messengers to pave the way for his Son the Bridegroom, to save his Bride, the people. The Bible documents that throughout history many ignored the patriarchs and prophets even killing them as also, in time, God's Son because collectively they spoke inconvenient truths. To accept God's invitation would require humility to discern that they were wrong and so work with others for God-centred living but that takes effort. Tragically, even their leaders who should have encouraged the people to hear and receive God's

invitation, refused to act or, as bad, neglected to act. In consequence, Jesus states all those will be denied a place in God's kingdom. Instead they will be thrown into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. To live without God's Peace, is a fearful judgement indeed.

Through his parable Jesus points up that if the Jewish nation will not take heed, God will turn his back on them as unworthy and instead search the highways and byways extending an invitation to the social misfits, the gentiles and any who will hear. Both the good and bad who accept his invitation will receive salvation. How then, should we live within Christ's Peace?

Paul, drawing on experience, explains this lovingly in his letter to his beloved friends in Philippi to provide a framework of peaceful togetherness for Christian living. We are to rejoice in the Lord who enables us to be of one mind to achieve harmony. We are to be gentle with each other, not worrying about anything but praying about everything and thanking God for the answers. Next Paul gives a checklist for Christian flourishing, which is to do all that is truthful, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, praise-worthy, working continuously at these things so that the Peace of God will be in our hearts and minds, as in Christ Jesus. There we are! The Christian life is as easy peasy as filling in our ballot papers!

I don't know about you but for me to memorise all that, I need to condense it into a sentence. When I was a child my father taught me a simple saying about creating or destroying togetherness, he said "We create in others the attitude we adopt towards them." Working together for Christ's Peace needs that mindfulness of being gracious with each other. It needs the right balance of enjoying the gifts God gives us, whilst honouring him by giving back in service.

God still offers his invitation to us so let's be inspired by his promises. Above all, we are all still young enough at heart to do as the recessional hymn invites taking one more step along the world working together, finding ways of sharing Christ's Peace, within the love of God. Amen.