

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

11 October 2020—Church Anniversary

inate between who could be invited as guests, so the good and the bad were all invited, and soon the hall was full. Their mission is our mission, of course, to invite others without discrimination or prejudice into his banquet. In fact we are only present at the celebration because we were invited and accepted the invitation, whether we were good or bad—most likely the latter! So, what we think of as ‘them’ in the story is actually ‘us’. So far so good, we get that we are now guests at the table of Jesus at the invitation of the king. This reassures us, although there now appears a new twist in the story. There’s a dress code!

A New Dress Code. You see, it isn’t enough just to turn up. We have to be dressed appropriately too. The Bible talks about this in lots of different ways. The Lord tells Job to get dressed in his presence (Job 38:3 ‘Gird up your loins’); there is the right dress for spiritual life and protection (Ephesians 6:11-17 ‘the full armour of God’); but before all that it is necessary to take off our old soiled clothes and put on the fresh clean clothes of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (Ephesians 4:22-24 ‘put off your old self...put on the new self’). Coming to church [which is not possible anyway at present] has never been enough on its own; singing songs, listening to prayers, readings and sermons, were always insufficient without being dressed in a right spirit, transformed by a living faith in God through Christ. The

original hearers of this wedding story would have been familiar with Isaiah’s hymn (61:10), ‘I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.’

Our Invitation. We are invited by God to come together for the banquet in honour of his Son. Surely our only response is to come, whatever form that takes, and to be dressed for the occasion.

SUGGESTED SONG

O For A Thousand Tongues
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2e475ww32Jg>

BLESSING

‘Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’ (Philippians 4:4-7)

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

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

Couples planning weddings and wedding receptions during recent months have been having to make difficult decisions about cutting down the numbers to comply with the latest regulations. For most it has been painful, although for a few it has enabled them to keep their celebration smaller without upsetting distant members of the family themselves. Agreeing the guest list and the seating plan can be fraught at the best of times, even without all the added pressure of keeping the day Covid-19 secure. Our Gospel reading today is the parable of the king who was preparing a wedding banquet for his son and his bride. His problem wasn’t fitting everyone in, but the fact that those invited refused to come. What a nightmare that would be for a couple getting married, to discover that even the people they had invited and expected didn’t turn up on the day. How would we respond?

Yet we do know what this feels like from other situations. It was only two years ago that we celebrated our 170th Church Anniversary. We had a great programme of events during the year, and created lots of positive memories—including the wonderful new banner

that now hangs above the stairs in the George Street Centre. We had a good time of thanksgiving and remembering God’s goodness and faithfulness to us throughout the years. Yet there were some really good events, that a small number of people had worked hard to prepare, that were very badly attended. It was very disappointing for those involved, given all the time and effort they had put in to getting things ready.

It can happen at any time. We plan something, we do all the hard work to put it together, but then when the time comes and we look forward to seeing everyone, to quote from the parable, ‘they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business.’

I suppose we could always say that there is something better to do. But is there, really? When we are members of God’s family, his children, is there really anything better than coming together with our brothers and sisters to worship him, to celebrate, to spend time sharing with each other, listening, praying, reading his Word and encouraging one another? Today we are celebrating another year as Ryde Baptist Church—not as a building but as people, living stones being built into his community.

Zoom is the safest way for most people to meet during this time, and will continue to be the main way we will meet for some time to come. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today and our Zoom Monday Prayer Meeting is at 7.00pm tomorrow. If you are able to join us, you will be very welcome. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There is more information at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

CALL TO WORSHIP

‘Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago... ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’ (Isaiah 25:1,9)

BIBLE READINGS

[Isaiah 25:1-9](#)

[Matthew 22:1-14](#)

[Philippians 4:1-9](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

Here I Am To Worship
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03G52K9X2hQ>

You Are Worthy Of My Praise
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=884m-Tekf54>

PRAYER

Lord God our Heavenly Father, we thank and praise you for another year in the life of Ryde Baptist Church. This has been a year unlike any other we have experienced in our history, and yet we marvel at the way that we have been able to adapt and adjust to the many changes we have seen. We thank you that your love has not changed, and that you have shown yourself in all sorts of unexpected ways. Despite being unable to use our building for many months, we thank you for the ways in which we have been able to remain in contact and continue to build our relationships with you and with each other; for the technology that has aided our communication—telephone, email, social media, website, Zoom, as well as printed material. We thank you for the new skills that we have learned, and the joy we have discovered in achievement. And yet we long to be able to meet together in person once more, so we thank you for the people who have been working hard so that in due season we will gradually be able to meet safely in our building again. Keep us wise, we pray, in the way we react and respond to each other, and keep us committed to those things that we have covenanted with you, with your church, and for the sake of your kingdom. On this day we praise you that you are the Lord of the Church and Lord of our lives, and that you keep us close to you and to each other. Amen.

TO PONDER

Church anniversaries are a good time to look back and think about how we came to be part of the church, those people who are part of our treasured memory, those times that have made us the people we are. They are a good time to be honest with God and with ourselves about where we stand in the present and to renew any commitments that we have made. They are also a good time to look forward, to plan, to dream, to change those things about ourselves that need adjusting or reforming, to make resolutions that we will put in place when the time is right. Spend time pondering these things and ask God to speak to you in your thoughts.

SUGGESTED SONGS

The Heart of Worship
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OD4tB1o6YLW>

I Will Offer Up My Life
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tYEoODXclE>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

A Familiar Pattern. The parable of the wedding banquet has a similar structure to the previous parable of the tenants. This time the king sends his servants several times to find guests to attend the celebration in honour of his son. Those originally invited and expected to attend have other plans. They don't seem to realise how risky a strategy it is

offending the king by ignoring the request and withholding their presence. If something rings bells here we must not ignore them; the parallel between this parable with how we respond to God's invitation to come together in worship in honour of Jesus is deliberate.

The Original Invitation. Throughout the Old Testament we discover it is the Lord who prepares a banquet for his people. We read in Isaiah 25, 'On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.' So just as with the vine imagery last week, it is clear here that the parable addresses those who were originally invited. They had disrespected the covenant invitation. They had not respected its terms and conditions. They had kept the benefits and the blessings for themselves. They were called to be a light to all nations, the feast was to be shared with 'all peoples', yet a wall had been built around the table and even within their nation there were those who remained in poverty. Those originally invited did things their own way. Of course this is a story and the king's reaction seems like an overreaction, but this serves to emphasise just how important is an invitation from the king.

The New Invitation. The king's servants now have a new mission to go and find others to fill the places at the banqueting table. They were not to discrim-