

## 1 Welcome

It is a great privilege to lead a time of worship both in the church and amongst those who are dependent on a written sermon.

As usual, I suggest that you find a comfortable place to sit where you will not be disturbed. In addition to your Bible, you will find it helpful to have a notebook or diary to record a thought or something God is saying to you. It is my prayer that you will hear the voice of God speaking to you to bring guidance and encouragement in this time of fear and uncertainty.

## 2 Call to worship

<sup>19</sup>*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>20</sup>*and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19&20).

These two verses represent one of the most important statements in the New Testament. The doors to God's kingdom are open to all humanity. There is no pecking order. All humanity enjoy the same privilege of access!

## 3 Prayer

Read Psalm 19:1-12 aloud, if possible. Then spend a few moments reflecting on what you have read. If a particular verse is meaningful, you may wish to write it in your notebook/diary. Note that verse 6 tells us that God is preparing a banquet for all the nations of the world! Is that not a cause for praise?

## 4 Scripture passages

**Isaiah 25:1-9**      A hymn of praise  
**Matthew 22:1-14**    The wedding feast

## 5 The great wedding feast

1. Think about the description of the Great Wedding Feast in Matthew 22. Do you regard it as possible? Would a king invite homeless street people to a prestigious wedding banquet to celebrate his son's marriage. Here is an extract from an article published in the Seattle Times on 20th January 2016, *Jilted Bride Invited Homeless People to Her Wedding Reception.*  
*By Olivia B. Waxman, January 20, 2016 11:42 Am Est.*

*When a Seattle bride-to-be, Dana Olsen, found out that her fiancé was backing out of the wedding, she did not cancel the reception. Instead, she invited homeless people in the area to attend the luxurious Saturday night affair. The Seattle Times reports families staying at the emergency shelter, Marys Place, got makeovers by hair and makeup artists before boarding buses to the Sodo Park event venue, where they were treated to a feast and a night of live music and dancing.*

*"I mean, if we can't have a good night, I hope that they have a great time," the bride told the news station King 5.*

*A similar situation made headlines last fall, when the mother of a jilted bride in Sacramento, California, invited about 120 homeless people to enjoy a lavish banquet at the Citizen Hotel.*

## 6 The Great Banquet

- (a) In Biblical times, a king or dignitary of high standing, would issue a two stage invitation to a celebratory banquet. In the first invitation a preliminary time period was identified. In the second invitation, an exact date was given and it was anticipated that all the guests who had responded, positively, to the first invitation would formally accept the invitation and confirm their attendance. However, who would be foolish enough to snub the king at the last minute?
  - (b) In Jesus' parable, the king is patient and sends a third invitation, to give the guests a further opportunity to please him. Still they do not respond positively and they attack the king's slaves. The king sends his soldiers to punish them severely.
  - (c) The king then instructs his servants to go to the streets and invite everyone they see to come to the feast. The banqueting hall must be filled!
2. If we reflect on the roles that the people in the parable relate to, we get a picture of salvation history: The king represents God. The banquet is the kingdom of God. The first group of slaves who went out with invitations represent the Old Testament prophets. The second group of slaves represent the New Testament evangelists and preachers. The invited guests are the Children of Israel. The people on the streets are the communities of the world (the Gentiles).
  3. The final point that the parable makes is that guests must be wearing a wedding robe! In the New Testament teaching we are urged to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no space to gratify the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:14).

### 6.1 Reflection

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the parable and its meaning. Have you responded to God's invitation? Are you worried that God will point out that you have not clothed yourself with Christ? God is patient and he calls you to himself. He will prepare and clothe you. Speak to him now. You will hear his response

## 7 Prayer of intercession

1. Write down 4 or 5 people who you would like to bring to God in prayer. State what you would like God to do for them. We have a significant homeless community in Bela-Bela. Next time you meet one, ask his/her name and promise to pray for them.
2. Pray for our believing community in Bela-Bela
3. Pray for those in authority. May they fulfil their responsibilities with commitment and integrity.
4. Pray for our country in this time of great medical and financial need

## 8 Benediction

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us, now and evermore*