

# Friday 6.5.16 Evening

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Date: 06 May 2016

Preacher: Rev. John Murdo MacDonald

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us from other congregations.

It's good to see you and it's good to have Ian MacDonald and Jim Murdo with us again this evening. The service this evening will be taken by the Reverend Jim Murdo MacDonald from Tyre and it will be an English service.

Tomorrow the service at 12 noon will be bilingual, mainly English, but as we would normally have on Sunday. A Gaelic psalm and a Gaelic prayer within it and then the services on the Lord's Day at 11 and 6 as usual.

A word about fellowships as well. We don't have the fellowship here on Friday night as we've done in the past because we have that fellowship on the Sunday evening now.

But this evening Neil Cameron and Keatak and Duncan and Morag have opened their houses up and there will be the opportunity just for informal fellowship in these two homes.

[ 1 : 08 ] And you're warmly invited to go either way this evening. Tomorrow evening there will be an informal fellowship here in the community centre and that will be led by Cami and ENA and all are warmly invited to come to that.

That is at half past seven and the prayer meeting will be at 6pm before that. So that's tomorrow at 12 noon, bilingual service and 6pm we meet together to pray and then half past seven for the informal fellowship.

So these I think are all the intimations and we hand over now to John Murdo and pray that God will bless him in the ministry through him. Thank you David. Thank you for your welcome. Thank you for your kind invitation to share with you at this very special time.

Thank you. It's a blessing and a privilege to be back with you again. It's also a real blessing and a privilege to share the services with Rembrandt D'Annecy and MacDonald.

I'll get my own back on the night. People ask me sometimes if we're related both to McDonald's and I say well yes actually he's my grandfather.

[ 2 : 34 ] I was converted through the preaching of the Reverend K.D. McLeod who's now been in recording. And K.D. in turn was converted through the preaching of Hermes Ian. So I'm claiming him as my grandfather.

Not just a bit too bad for me. Thank you for your invitation. Thank you for your warm welcome. Let's worship God together. Let's sing to God's praise in Psalm 95.

And we'll sing verses 1 to 6. A psalm of praise to God. Come let us sing to the Lord. Come let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.

Let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice. Let us sing psalms to him with grace. And make a joyful noise. For God a great God and great King.

Above all gods he is. Steps of the earth are in his hand. The strength of hills is his. To him the spacious sea belongs. For he the same did make.

[ 3 : 39 ] The dry land also from his hands is fallen. At first to take. O come and let us worship him. Let us bow down with all. And on our knees before the Lord and make it.

Let us fall. Let's sing these verses to God's praise. O come let us sing to the Lord. O come let us sing to the Lord.

O come let us everyone. sing to the Lord.

O. Let us be for His presence come with peace and thankful voice.

Let us sing songs to Him with grace and make a joyful noise.

[ 5 : 09 ] For God the great God the great King are all for what He is.

Depths of the earth are in His hand, the strength of His is His.

To Him the spacious sea belongs, for He the saint did me.  
Let us sing song from His hands, His form and mercy take.  
O come and let us worship Him, let us back and with all.  
[ 6 : 34 ] And all the things before the Lord, I will make a pleasure song.

Let's come to God. Let us bow and leave before God. And open our hearts and eyes in faith. Let us pray together. And gracious God, our loving Father in heaven, we thank you again this evening that we can indeed come and sing your praises.

That we can come and worship you. You are the eternal God, the maker of heaven and earth. You are our creator and redeemer. And Lord, we approach you with our prayers, with our worship, with our adoration.

And Lord, we give thanks that we can sing from our hearts. We can open our lips and our hearts in praise to you again this evening. For you are worthy of praise from every creature.

And you are worthy of our worship. And indeed we come and we bow before you. And we acknowledge your greatness, your majesty. Lord, as we look around us and we see this very evening the beauty of your creation.

[ 7 : 57 ] So our hearts sing in praise of the God who has formed all things from nothing. To your glory and for our wonderful blessing. Lord, we look around and we see the beauty of all that you have done.

And we praise you and we worship you. And as we come into your nearer presence in this act of worship. So Lord, we become aware that you are not just a mighty and powerful creator, God. You are a holy God. And as we draw near, so we are made so much aware that we are not holy. Indeed that we are sinful in thought and word and deed.

Lord, that we know that we are imperfect in every way. May that our love is inconstant and incomplete. Our deeds, our very deeds and thoughts and words betray our sinfulness.

We seek to please ourselves rather than to please you. We seek to satisfy our own desires rather than seek your will for us. We are cold and indifferent towards you and towards one another.

[ 9 : 03 ] Heavenly Father, look down upon us in your mercy. And forgive us for our sins and our shortcomings. We thank you that we can come to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

A name that opens up now for us the very courts of heaven and the heart of our Father. A name that is above all other names. And we thank you that as we come, we come to ask forgiveness, to look for your mercy.

And we thank you that in him we have a Saviour who has opened the door to heaven for us. A Saviour who has made propitiation for our sins.

A mediator who has reconciled us to you. And a great High Priest who lives even now to pray for us at your right hand. And we give thanks.

And as we come to prepare our hearts to remember his death until he comes again. Lord, we pray that our hearts and minds will be focused upon him. Take away at this time all distractions and intrusions.

[ 10 : 06 ] That we would be enabled to come afresh tonight to the cross of Calvary. That we may be able to know what has been accomplished there. May we see anew the triumphs of your grace in the finished work of Jesus on our behalf.

Help us through the Gospel to look in humility and in love. And with grateful hearts upon the one who was bruised and pierced and wounded so that we might be healed.

Still our hearts, Lord, we pray as we gaze upon the one who purchased us with his precious blood. And who laid down his life for sinners such as we are. Gracious God, we worship you.

In the light of your redeeming love. And we pray that we would know the presence of our risen Lord with us here this evening. We know that he is here with us because he promises to be.

Take away, we pray, anything. Any distractions and intrusions which would come in the way of us being aware of his presence. That would come in the way of us hearing his voice as he speaks to us tonight.

[ 11 : 12 ] For he desires to speak to us through his word. Lord, we bring before you our prayers for those who cannot be with us this evening.

Whether because of illness or old age or infirmity or other responsibilities. Lord, we pray that you will be with them where they are. We thank you that you are not restricted by buildings or by distance.

We pray that those who cannot be with us. Those who would like to be here. Who have a desire in their heart and yet cannot be here. That they would know your presence. Bless them where they are.

We pray, Lord, especially for those who have no desire to be here tonight. Those who see nothing in Christ that they would desire them. Those who see no reason to worship you.

Those who are distracted and taken up with the things of this world. Those whose attention is taken up perhaps by the duties and responsibilities of work.

[12:07] Or seeking to gather together more and more of the treasures and the riches of this world. Lord, help them to see that the riches of this world will not stand in the light of eternity.

And we pray, Lord, that you would work in their hearts and lives. And draw them, Lord, to yourself. We pray, Lord, for those who are here and who do not yet know you.

Those who are seeking after truth. Those who have many spiritual questions and are searching for answers. Lord, Jesus Christ, tonight may they come to know that the answer lies in knowing you.

For you are the way and the truth and the life. And we pray that you would draw to yourself all those who are halting between two opinions. That they may know the peace and the love and the mercy and the grace that is to be found in you alone.

We thank you, Lord, for the two ladies who professed faith last evening. Lord, we rejoice with the angels in heaven. For we know that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

[13:13] And we give thanks, Lord, as people are added to your church. That we can rejoice with them. That we can, heavenly Father, give thanks and praise you for your work in their lives.

Lord, tonight we know that you are here. We know that you are a powerful and a wonderful God. And, Lord, so often we expect so little from you.

Lord, we come to church and we go through a routine of having a service. And the living God amongst us sometimes is not the focus of our attention.

Help us, Lord, tonight to expect much from you. Not to expect anything from a minister. But to expect, Lord, great things from God. For you are a great God.

Give us, Lord, a sense of expectancy. Give us a sense of an awareness of your presence here tonight. And give us, Lord, your blessing. Lord, if there are folks here tonight who do not know you.

[14:14] Lord Jesus Christ, that you would reveal yourself to them. And that for those of us who do know you. That we would tonight have a renewed vision of your glory.

That we would be strengthened in our commitment and resolve. Bless the work of this congregation here. Bless the witness that we have in this community here.

We pray, again, that you would pour out, Lord, your blessing. That you would send them out into this community with the gospel. Into hearts and homes that are broken and bruised.

That are torn apart by sin and by difficulties. By poverty, Lord, by addictions and other problems, Lord. Send us out with the healing balm of Jesus Christ.

As we said, into hearts and homes that so desperately need to know him. And the power of his love. We pray, Heavenly Father, now that you would bless this act of worship.

[15:15] May we indeed worship in spirit and truth. Jesus said, God is spirit. And those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth. Lord, please take away anything that would hinder your walking in our midst tonight.

There are precious souls in here tonight who need to hear your voice. Lord, just take anything human and remove it. And speak into hearts and lives tonight.

We pray all of these things in the name and for the glory of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Let's sing again. Mission Praise number 746. I hope that we know very well. I'm sure. But the fact that we know it very well doesn't mean that it's still not wonderful.

And it's amazing to be able to sing these words at the note of your prayer. Mission Praise 746. What a friend we have in Jesus.

[16:21] All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege we carry. Everything to God. We pray. And then these words, Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry. Everything to God. We pray. Mission Praise 746. Mission Praise 6. Let's have time to God's Word.

As we find it in the Gospel according to Luke. And chapter 14. Luke chapter 14. And we're going to read from the beginning of the chapter down to the verse, Mark 24.

Luke 14, verses 1 to 24. One Sabbath when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?

[ 17 : 39 ] But they remained silent. So, taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away. Then he asked them, if one of you has a son, an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately put him out?

And they had nothing to say. When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable. When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, but a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.

If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this man your seat. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, friend, move up to a better place. Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Then Jesus said to his host, when you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives or your rich neighbours.

[ 19 : 03 ] If you do, they may invite you back, and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.

Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

Jesus replied, A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited the many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready.

But the all-alive began to make excuses. The first said, I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me. Another said, I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out.

Please excuse me. Still another said, I have just got married, so I can't come. The servant came back and reported this to his master.

[ 20 : 19 ] Then the owner of the house became angry, and ordered his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring in the poor and the crippled, the blind, and the lame.

So the servant said, What you have ordered has been done, but it is still room. Then the master told his servant, Go out to the roads and country lanes, and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my equity. Amen. We pray God will bless his word to us, and we pray also that he will speak to us through it, as we look at it shortly. Let's sing again to God's praise. We're singing in Mission Phase, number 396.

Mission Phase 396. And as I said, Jesus Christ is with us this evening.

[ 21 : 24 ] He promises to be here by his Spirit, and he invites us to come to him tonight. And this is a very appropriate hymn to say. There is nothing we can bring.

Jesus invites us to come as we are. Just as I am without one free, but that thy blood was shed from me, and that thou bidst me come to thee.

That's very important to the man that Jesus calls us to him. Oh, Lamb of God, I come. Let's sing to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. God's help, and for the help of the Holy Spirit, can we open up the passage that we read, let's look at it together, and I really see and hear what Jesus has to say to us this evening. Amen. Amen. I again, thank you for your kind invitation to join with you this weekend. It is a special blessing and a privilege, and I thank you. And as we look ahead to Sunday, and we pray that God will prepare our hearts.

[ 22 : 34 ] as we are looking at coming together to share communion at the Holy Spirit. I want us to look tonight at another invitation.

An invitation that we find in this chapter of Luke's Gospel, Luke 14. We read that at the beginning of the chapter that Jesus is invited to the house of a Pharisee, where, as we see, he heals a man with dropsy and by doing so, incurs the wrath of the Pharisees.

Then we notice that the Pharisees are striving for the best places at the table. We see that Jesus challenges them in verse 8, following their behavior and their attitude.

And he tells them not to invite rich and influential and important people to their table, but to invite those who couldn't pay them back.

Rather, not to extend invitations to the rich and well-known, but to the poor, the untouchables, the cripples, the lame, the blind, the people that the Pharisees looked down their noses at.

[ 23 : 52 ] And then in verse 15, as if in response to the words of Jesus, some unidentified guest speaks these words that we have here.

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God. In his commentary on this passage of Scripture, Alexander McFarren points out something very interesting and very challenging.

He says that this man's words can be interpreted in two different ways. He says that we can take them at face value.

We can consider them to be an honest and heartfelt yearning in this man's heart for the things of God. And they could, well, I'll do just that.

Or, says McLaren, we can consider these words to be a pious platitude. A sort of embarrassed reaction to the words of Jesus in the preceding verses.

[ 25 : 08 ] And if we visualize the situation in our mind's eye, we can see why McLaren would think that. The religious leaders of the Jews have gathered together in the house of one of their own, one of the Pharisees.

They would have been completely shocked at the words of Jesus in verse 13. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

They were to invite to their tables people that they considered to be, as I said, untouchable, literally untouchable people that they would, wouldn't dream of going anywhere near, never mind if that came to their tables.

And there may very well have been that sort of embarrassed silence as these religious men had the challenge of Jesus Christ. And as the Pharisees considered the implications of what Jesus just said, McLaren says, this man may well have been so embarrassed that he felt he had to say something to us to come on up in silence.

McLaren says it was a very proper thing to say, but there was a rain of commonplace piety about it that struck unpleasantly on Christ's fear.

[ 26 : 36 ] Was it a case of heartfelt desire for a hunger for the things of God? Or was it a case of what, as Isaiah says, these people honouring with their lips, with their hearts, are far from you?

Whatever the spirit in which these words were spoken, and we don't know and we can't know, what is really important for us is what spirit do we approach God in tonight?

Am we approaching God with an honest, heartfelt desire to know Him and to know Him better and to know Him deeper and to fall deeper and deeper in love with Him?

Or are we just going through the motions? Saying the right things and doing the right things, giving the appearance of agreeing with what Jesus says, and yet not prepared to accept the challenging demands which He takes upon each and every one of us.

Now, only God and we ourselves really know. I can't see good hearts, and you can't see mine, thank goodness. But God knows.

[ 27 : 58 ] He knows what spirit, what attitude, where our hearts are tonight as we come to worship Him. It appears certainly that Jesus was aware that there were some in the company that day whose hearts were certainly not right towards God, for He goes on to tell this parable about a great feast that nobody wanted to come to, or at least at the end didn't want to.

And I believe that in a way Jesus is saying something that is really challenging to us here this evening. Jesus is saying something like this.

He is saying you are talking about the blessings of God and the feast in the kingdom of heaven.

And you talk in pious religious clichés about this feast that God has prepared, and yet the very bread of life, the very heart of that feast is standing in front of you, and you are rejecting Him.

And Jesus says the same to us this evening. I'll be serious about this. Because I, the bread of life, is standing here in your midst.

And I can see your heart. And I can see where you are. And that's a challenge to each heart in here tonight, starting with me.

[ 29 : 32 ] Jesus Christ is here. And the question is, do our hearts feel hunger to know Him and to meet with Him tonight and to speak with Him and to worship Him and to let Him speak with us?

Or are we just going through the motions? In this parable, Jesus goes on to tell of an invitation that was extended and of a response of those who were invited and want us to look together at the parable.

For the very same invitation is extended to us tonight. There is a feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. We'll reach later on at the wedding supper of the Lamb. And Jesus invites us to come.

I don't know, I said yesterday morning, one of the good things in a sense of coming to preach in a congregation. I know quite a lot of you and I know when we stand with the Lord and many of you in here, I don't know when we stand with Christ.

[ 30 : 49 ] And, you know, I can, in that sense, I can say whatever I like. I don't know if you are. But, I'm not sure when we stand with regard to this invitation.

But what I do know is that Jesus Christ extends it again tonight. And you know, and he knows when we stand. So, and when the invitation is sent out, many people initially are going to come and you can always hear them say, oh yes, yes, we'll be there.

They make promises. We wouldn't miss it for the world. Yes, we're looking forward to it. And so, as we read, on the day when the feast was ready, the seventh was sent out to remind the guests and invite them all to come.

And then they all come with their excuses. And we're all good at making excuses. I'm going, there are three specific excuses in here.

And just to look at them briefly. The first man in verse 18 says, I have just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me. And the field in this instance really speaks to us of the obstacle of materialism or the desire for more and more worldly possessions.

[ 32 : 11 ] The obstacle that that creates to somebody perceiving and accepting the gospel and accepting Christ. Remember that the man had initially accepted this invitation.

He had promised to come. He had said, yes, I will come. And he well had been very enthusiastic, even delighted at having been asked to this wonderful feast.

But now that he has to make good his promise to the master of the feast, he suddenly appears to remember that he's got a field and he must go and inspect it.

And he is quite polite. He even asks to be excused. In a way, he maybe felt sorry for not being able to go. We don't know again.

We don't know his heart. But we do know that there is something that he places more value upon than accepting this invitation of coming to the feast. His possessions were of more value than the invitation.

[ 33 : 08 ] He would prefer to go, he said, and view his field as an investment than honour his promise to the master of the feast. Now, tonight in here, again, he said, I don't know your heart.

only God knows our hearts. There are those who have heard the invitation of the gospel and shown many, many times. And you may even have promised Christ that you will come.

You may have even said to him, Lord, thank you so much for your invitation. I will come. I will come one day. I promise.

And yet, as time goes on, the voice of Christ and his invitation gets further and further away. And you're taken up with possessions, a desire to make money, a desire to acquire more possessions. And your focus is upon that. And the promise that you made to Jesus, maybe, maybe now even years ago, has faded away into the past and you've forgotten it.

[ 34 : 31 ] Maybe he just comes up again and you hear something or someone speaks to you and you come to church and you're reminded, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, one day, one day.

But in the meantime, you're looking focused on what the world has been given you, the possessions, material, virtues of this world.

And you're enjoying it. Maybe you're young and you're enjoying all these things. And it's either time enough. Christ's invitation, as one commentator says, finds us why we're not in material riches.

But in eternal truths, I change the standards of righteousness and holiness. What we have here are eternal truths, is eternal life.

And in the life of all of that, the riches of this world pale into his significance. So I want to ask you tonight, have you made a promise to Christ?

[ 35 : 42 ] have you heard him invite you? Have you heard that invitation clearly? Have you understood that it's for you? Have you understood that you need Christ as your saviour?

And I'll be saying tonight, yes, yes, I'll come, I'll come one day. and you look after the week and you say, I've got too many things to look after, I've got too many things that need attention.

I'll put this invitation again, I'll put it on the back burner, one day, one day. You see, one Sunday we'll come to church and we'll look ahead out into a week that won't exist, that won't be there.

But Jesus is here tonight and he invites you again. Why are you going to wait until next week or the week after?

What's the point? If you know that you need a saviour for your soul and you know that Jesus Christ is here tonight as our saviour, why are you going to wait until next week or the week after?

[ 37 : 13 ] Are you going to allow things like money or possessions or whatever to distract you from this really crucially important invitation that you have to respond to?

So this man focuses on his possessions. The second one's excuse in verse 19 again, not any polite excuse.

I've just bought yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me. And we can consider these yoke of oxen as business concerns, care of responsibilities, our employment, what we do, that takes up so much of our time.

For the first man, it was in a sense a matter of preferences, if you put it this way. He preferred worldly, earthly riches to the riches of the kingdom of heaven.

It was a matter of preference. For this second man, it was a matter of priorities. Yes, thank you for that wonderful invitation. I know it's important, but it's not as important as what I've got to do.

[ 38 : 23 ] I have things to do. There are things that I must do. We all have responsibilities and duties that we attend to, but there are many like this man who put their focus upon building a successful career or making sure that his employment is safe.

Now, these things are all important, but what he's doing is giving priority to his business, to his airfully responsibility by neglecting spiritual matters, by neglecting his soul.

Watch out proper man, he gains the whole world, but he becomes chairman of the board, and loses his soul. That's the priority. Our spiritual welfare, Jesus warns us, here tonight again, what shall profit you if you get the whole world, not just get the boardroom, not just be managing director, but get the whole world.

Our spiritual welfare, our return of souls, are at stake.

Not our career prospects. It's our revelation into the kingdom of God, not our promotion to the boardroom. And if our priorities are wrong, like this man, there's a danger that these things which we consider at promotion, may very well be the very things that are actually bringing us down, for we may well be busy in the service of the wrong master.

[ 40 : 05 ] No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God. If we promise to Christ, yes, I'm going to come, but first let me attend to my career.

What we say to Jesus is, thank you for the invitation, but I have more. important things to worry about. It's a matter of priorities. What are our priorities tonight?

What is the most important thing for us to do? Well, Jesus tells us clearly that the most important thing we need to do is to make sure that our souls are safe.

He tells us that clearly. The issue of our eternal souls are more important than the issue of our head years. Do we understand that?

What are our priorities tonight? Are the blessings of Christ? Is the salvation of our eternal soul really the most important thing on our to-do list?

[ 41 : 14 ] or is there something else we consider more important? Jesus is saying there is nothing more important. There is absolutely nothing more important than our souls.

The third excuse, the first excuse was a matter of preference. The second excuse was a matter of priorities. And the third excuse which we find in verse 29 speaks to us of family commitments and relationships.

I have just been married so I can't come. Now without doubt we have very important obligations and responsibilities to others, especially to wives as all married men will tell you.

But we have obligations to God too. Our primary obligation is to ensure that our relationship with God is right. Because if that relationship is not right, then the other relationships will not.

As soon as our relationship with God is right in class, we then our relationships with others will fall into place. It is unwise for us to work at developing our relationship with others at the expense of neglecting our relationship with God.

[ 42 : 27 ] Now this is a very important word to the young folk here. Because we're growing up and we're going out into the world and we're looking at establishing relationships and that's wonderful people.

And that's exciting. But the most important thing of all is your relationship with God, your relationship with Jesus Christ. And there are many people who will not accept the invitation of the gospel because of their relationships with others, because they're afraid of what other people will say.

Whether husbands or wives or parents or brothers or sisters or friends, they may, we think, disapprove if we give our lives to Christ tonight.

What would others say? Where is it really that important? Is it more important than your soul? And I wonder again if God is speaking to you tonight and if your relationships with other people are stopping you from responding to the invitation of Christ.

Yes, yes, yes, Lord Jesus, I would be on to come. I'm frightened of what others should say. This man here was so taken up with his own wedding feast that he didn't understand that he was turning down an invitation to the greatest wedding feast of all.

[ 44 : 02 ] Lord Jesus, I would be on to the end of the day. Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like a roar of rushing waters, and like loud peals of thunder, shouting Hallelujah, for our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to bear.

This man was more taken up with his own wedding feast, and his own wedding preparations, and his own wife, and understandably in one sense so, that he didn't understand he was turning down an invitation to the greatest wedding feast of all.

Is there something tonight that you are putting before Jesus Christ in your life before, rather, to do with your relationship?

Is there some passion of people who are stopping you from taking that step in faith, and responding to that invitation from Jesus tonight? Is there anything at all that is that, as we said, riches, world, riches, responsibilities and duties, carry year, employment, relationships?

[ 45 : 29 ] What's the excuse tonight that you are using when Christ comes to you and says, come, come to me, give me your heart, and give me your life?

Remember what he said to the assembled Pharisees? you're speaking in pious platitudes and religious speeches about the blessing of God, about the feast in the kingdom of heaven, and yet the very bread of life, the very heart, the very essence of that feast is standing in front of you, and you're rejecting him.

you're making excuses just like these men in the parable. And then Jesus continues with the parable in verse 21, he said it comes back to report what has happened, and I guess we would expect that the banquet would be called off because there's nobody going to turn up, but it's not. It's not. And servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant to go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the maim.

The master of the feast sent his servant out again and said, go to these people, the poor and the crippled and the labour of the blind. I notice these are the very people that the Pharisees despised and rejected, those who are mentioned in verse 13.

[ 47 : 18 ] He invites the poor, he invites those people who could never pay him back. I'd be sitting here tonight and think, well, yes, I hear that invitation, but I am, I'm sick, I have nothing that I can bring to God, I can't accept an invitation without bringing something just as I am, without one key, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

You see, you know that you have heard, yes, well, so does Jesus, and he still asks you to come. come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters, and you who have no money, come by and eat, without money and without price.

Jesus Christ invites the poor. people who are thirsty, and if you understand your sinfulness, and your need of forgiveness, then that makes you poor, but Jesus still invites you to come.

He invites the crippled and the lame, those people who are unable to get around on their own, those people, in fact, who couldn't really come to the feast without help of someone else.

This is a picture of humanity by nature, crippled by our sin, unable to get to God by ourselves. The crippled and the lame, although the world finds nothing attractive in these people, and the Pharisees, you know, the way they despise them shows us that, even religious people.

[ 49 : 14 ] Jesus loves them. And Jesus died for them. Jesus came to save them, us.

Not them, but us. The crippled and the lame. And he calls the blind. He calls the people who are trapped in a world of darkness, spiritual darkness, different kinds of darkness under an out human experience.

The darkness our sins brings. other addictions. I spent 20 years drinking alcoholics.

And that's a dark place to be. The light of the love of Jesus Christ came to open my eyes. love of Jesus.

And that's why I'm here tonight, not because I'm more clever than you, or more holy than you, and I've got a degree. But because Jesus Christ came to me in a place of darkness, a place of pain.

[ 50 : 25 ] And he healed me, and he restored me, and he saved me, and he told me to go and tell other people about it. And he's here tonight.

And he wants you to tell me, and he wants to tell you that he loves you. And the servant goes out into the town, and it says in verse 23, make them come in, or compel them to come in.

Why does he say that? Well, because these people needed to be persuaded, they needed to be compeled. But for a very different reason to those who had initially rejected the invitation.

The people who had originally been invited to this feast did not see their need to come in. At the end of the day, there were other things that were more important that they had to attend to.

Or at least they thought there were other things that were more important. The reason why this second lot of people had to be compelled was not to make them see their need, I don't think.

[ 51 : 48 ] They were all too well aware of their need. They knew that they were blind and poor and lame and crippled. What they needed to be persuaded of was that this invitation was genuine.

And you can almost picture them peering from behind the headfroves and out of the alleyways, unable to believe that this invitation was really for them. How could anyone wish to invite them to a great feast?

They were completely unworthy. What about you tonight? Is that where you are tonight?

Have you heard this invitation? And are you at a place where you can't believe that it's for me? That you can't possibly believe that God could love you and die for you?

Have you heard this invitation over and over again? And because of a sense of your own unworthiness, and unfitness, and just an inability to believe that this invitation could possibly be for someone like you.

[ 53 : 00 ] Perhaps tonight you are like these people peering from behind headfroves and out of alleyways. Of sin, and disobedience even, weakness, and weakness.

Unable to believe that the Lord of glory could ever extend such an invitation to you. On Sunday morning, those of us who, God willing, will sit at the Lord's table.

Will do so not because we are worthy, but because we too are poor and blind and lame and crippled.

And believe me, it came as just as much as a shock and a surprise and an amazement to us to discover that the invitation was for us. And the invitation is extended once again tonight.

Jesus Christ is here. Once again, you've heard his invitation, not mine, of the church, but of Christ. And you're going to make an excuse again.

[ 54 : 21 ] Don't like to sound dramatic or to be dramatic, but you may never hear this invitation again. That's not being dramatic, that's a fact. I've taken two funerals this week before I came here.

And one Sunday there may not be a week stretching out in front of you. And that's a fact. Please don't make an excuse again tonight.

Please don't. Christ knows you. You will come to Christ not because you're worthy and because he is worthy and he will never let you down.

And please don't let a sense of your own unworthiness stop you. Christ knows you better than you know yourself. and yet he still stands here and extends an invitation to you.

I believe that the great preacher Charles Virgin was converted under the preaching of an old elder.

[ 55 : 43 ] As I remember, he had gone to church on a very snowy day and the minister hadn't been able to make it. And an old faithful elder had stood in the gap and after about ten minutes had run out of something to say.

You may say you wish that maybe minister were going like that. And the old elder couldn't think of anything else to say. And he stopped and he said, look to Jesus.

And Spurgeon, I believe, was sitting up in the bathroom and he looked up at him and he said, young man, look to Jesus. And Spurgeon did just that and looked to Jesus and he was saved.

And the very same Jesus is here tonight. And I can't say anything better than that. You may wish I'd probably said that at half past seven and saved you all the last half an hour.

But that's all I can say. And that's all that any minister can say. Look to Jesus. And Jesus Christ is here. And he invites you and he calls you to come, not because of your worthiness, but because of his love for you.

[ 57 : 04 ] Please, please go to any more excuses. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, Christ, we thank you that you are here this evening, that you are with us, and that you extend again to us this invitation.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Oh, Lord Jesus, help us just to respond to that invitation.

Help us, Lord, to put all of these other things that may claim or call on our time or our attention or on our souls, to put them aside and to look to Jesus, to look to you.

Thank you, Lord, thank you for this time that we can come and obey your command to remember your death until you come again in glory. Oh, Lord, may it be a time of blessing.

May it be a time when we stop making excuses. May it be a time when we engage with your Christ who loves us and died for us and follows us again tonight.

[ 58 : 15 ] In your name's sake and for your glory we pray. Amen. Hymn number 381 in the Red Books, Hymn 351.

I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me while he left the realms of glory for the cross on Calvary. Hymn 381.

Hymn I am saved by the soul of the Christ who died for me.

How He left the world of glory for the cross of Calorie.

Yes, I sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

[ 59 : 46 ] Sing it in the saints in glory rather by the coastal sea.

I was lost but Jesus found me found the sheep that went astray.

Raise me up and gently let me bow into the narrow way.

Yes, I sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it when they sing in glory rather by the coastal sea.

[ 60 : 55 ] Faith was I and fears possessed me first was I from many at all.

Hope was gone and shaped his destiny but His love was part of me.

Yes, I sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it when they sing in glory rather by the coastal sea.

Sing it when they sing in glory in the sea. Days of darkness still beneath me sorrows, bounds I long betray but His presence still beneath me but His presence still beneath me by His light beyond the death.

[ 62 : 13 ] Yes, I sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me. Of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it when they sing in glory that He was I and fears of me. Sing it when they sing in glory rather by the coastal sea.

And the king, the children of the rivercciones and monsters are mixtrely still beneath me.

O live son for me, tiring on the sea. The story of the Christ who died for me Sing to them, the sins of glory God, the heart, the rest of the sea Just to remind you that this session remains open for any who wish to come and profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and tell others that they love him and answer his invitation Jesus says, if today you hear my voice, do not harden Please God, let's close

with a benediction

And now may grace and mercy and peace from almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God rest upon us and remain with us now and evermore Amen