

29.3.26 am The Invitation

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Preacher: Dr George Craig

[0 : 00] Good morning. A warm welcome to everyone. A warm welcome to your visitors. We have a couple of visitors with us today. A lot of visitors over here. The guys from camp are here. So a warm welcome to you guys. I hope you got some sleep last night.

And the leader. Although probably on our list. But that probably didn't matter. You've got a lot less sleep probably. So it's good to have you with us. And it's good to see you.

So this morning I'll introduce the sermon. The worship service. And then Dr Craig is going to do the reading. And he's going to do the sermon this morning.

So very helpful for George for helping out. Just a busy time for me. That's pretty wild. So just to go over a couple of notices. Tea and coffee is served after. So tea and coffee will just be here. And you're very welcome to stay behind for that.

This is the Irish creche as well. The creche is just in the room behind me. So if anyone needs to go in to creche. You can do so at any time. Just feel free to go in whenever you need to. Or stay likewise.

[1 : 22] So this evening. The service will be taken by James McKeever. It will be a Gaelic service. And after the Gaelic service. There will be an English fellowship. In the hall here. Starting at quarter past seven.

And I believe the youth fellowship are going to host that. So I hope it's all planned. And you've got it all ready to go. So I'll be excited to be there. So if you can come along for that. Everyone's very welcome for that time of fellowship this evening.

Just for the week ahead. We're looking at the. Hoping that the community lunch will be on tomorrow. It takes place between 12 and 2. Just in the room at the side.

And the collection they are. I think it was down for crossroads on the email. But it's actually. Tarbert and Bloom that the collections are going to. So if you can make. If you can make it all on with that. Everyone's very welcome.

Also. Mostly the routine. Events through the week. Ladies fellowship. Wednesday prayer meeting. Taken by myself.

[2 : 33] Again. Everyone's very welcome to come along. Men's Bible study. Third evening. We missed the last. Last. Last fortnight ago. We missed it. But it actually falls in line.

With the resurrection story. Which we'll have on Thursday evening. At half past seven. So. All men are very welcome to come along. To that. It's just an informal time. Just. We could through the passage.

And have a look at what it says. Just to also notice. There'll be no Friday clubs. For the young ones. This week. Just the Easter holidays.

Going on. And. Just to remind ourselves. It deals away. The weeks when the pastoral issues. Speak to Anelda.

And. And. Reverend Donald McDonald. Dolan. Is available. If required. And. Services next week. Will be taken by Anthony Latham. And in the evening.

[3 : 34] What's the answer? That's Kiki. Kiki's taken the evening. So. Be in prayer for the preparations this week at Sveil. So. I think that's all the information I'm going to go over.

There. Will be another Presby Scaldale camp. Secondary one to secondary on the first. To the fourth of May. So lots of information today. Lots of things to go over.

Lots of things to be praying about. And. We just commit them to the Lord. In prayer. In prayer. So we'll begin our time of worship. And we'll begin by singing in Psalm 25.

We'll sing from verse 4. The words will appear on the screen. These words. Asking.

The psalmist is asking for God to direct him. So it says. Show me thy ways. O Lord. Thy paths. O teach thou me.

[4 : 34] And do they lead me. In thy truth. Therein. Thy teacher. Be. We'll sing. Down to verse 10. And it says. The whole paths of the Lord.

Are truth and mercy sure. To those that do his covenant keep. And testimonies pure. So we'll sing these words. To God's praise.

Show me thy ways. O Lord. And we stand to sing. Show me thy ways.

O Lord. Thy paths. O teach thou me. And do thou lead me.

To me. in my truth within my teacher be for thou art for God does to me salvation send and I upon me all the day expecting to attend like tender mercy's Lord I pray thee to remember and loving kindnesses for they have been old forever my sins and force of you to the

[6 : 55] Lord forget after thy mercy think on me and for thy goodness goodness claim!

God good and love right is the way heal sinners show!

the meek in judgment he will guide and make his path to Lord the hope!

died! died! died let us join together in a word of prayer our father in heaven we give thanks for this day and opportunity that we have to come and worship you and as we do lord we pray that you would still our hearts that your peace would be over us and that we would know the presence of your holy spirit amongst us lord help us to acknowledge the importance and the reverence we should have as we come to worship you you are the god has created all things you're the god whose hand is over all things you keep us each and every day you give to us the blessings that we have you guide us and instruct us through your word and so lord we pray that as we open the world together as we draw near to worship you that we would see just how great just how mighty just how awesome you are but also that we would see how frail we are how sinful we are how our own hearts are so inclined to go after things that satisfy us for the moment things that our heart longs for just to get entertained by things in this world that don't last help us lord as we open up the bible to teach us about that these things that these things that these things are foolish to do that it's it's not wise to heap up treasure on earth but it is wise to heap up treasure in heaven so lord we pray that you would help us whatever age we are to know this to know what it means to live our life that will store up treasure in heaven to know what it means to live our life that loves us like jesus christ he said an example for us to love one another to love our neighbor to take care of each and every person because each person is made an image of god and you have made us all as individuals you have made us all different and so you will use us differently you have given us different gifts and you have given us a purpose in life to glorify you with these gifts and to find our enjoyment in you as we live our lives using these gifts for your glory so we pray that you would direct us as we open up your bible and teach us and show us your ways we ask we pray for the service this morning we pray for george as

he opens up the world to us we pray that you would help us we pray that it would be a blessing to each of us whether we're here in person whether we're watching online we pray that there would be something in it that we would take with us into the week ahead something of encouragement something of correction something that will challenge us even if we're not a believer challenge us we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that we pray that you would bless our time to believe in jesus card to trust in him and receive that free gift that is given to us in the gospel Lord we pray that you would bless our time together. We pray that you would bless the word wherever it is preached, across our island, across our nation and even across our world.

[13 : 09] Where people gather in churches, where people gather outside, where people are hiding in their gathering, we pray that you would bless them by the power of your spirit. We pray that you would be with us in all our activities that we have in the church. We pray that you would help us in these things. We pray that even in the smallest of tasks that we are blessing that we would speak to each other and encourage one another and stir one another up. We also be a witness to those around us, what it means to live a life devoted and trusted in Jesus' card. We pray for the children here. We pray that we are blessing for them to spend time together at camp. We pray for the children that will be going on holidays. We pray that you would bless them in that time. Be over them and keep them safe. We pray for David on holiday holiday as well. We pray that you would refresh them and give them rest. We pray that you would be over us in all things. We pray that you would help us in all, guide us in all things. We pray that you would be a good shepherd. And we pray that you would help us to be lights in darkness, wherever you put us. In school, in our

workplace, or even across the world. And we pray for this world. We pray for the gospel in this world. And we pray for a world that is upside down.

There is lots of people in need of food. And lots of people that have plenty of food. And plenty of warmth. And have known word of the gospel. We pray for the gospel to come and power us. All nations, all people that your kingdom would come. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.

So that's for the younger ones, the primary age children to come and I'll say a word to you guys. Just go and take a seat.

Maybe you know what happened this morning. Oops. Anything different happened this morning in your house? Did mom or dad have to get any distance in the house this morning? Maybe they did it anything changed this morning?

the clock? yeah, you're right, the clock's changed. Time's changed, forward and out, so we've got an hour later today.

[16:11] But I want to speak to you about time, but a different kind of time, okay? This is my kind of time. This is called a timing belt.

Do you think this goes on a clock? No? And goes on a watch? No.

Where do you think this goes? Any idea? No? Any guesses? A digger. A digger? You're right. A digger would probably have one of them. What part of the digger would have it?

The wheels. Well, okay. No, it doesn't go on the wheels, but look, wheels would have something similar. Any other part of an engine?

Clacks, not the stacks. You've probably got off guard yet, I didn't think of it as a digger. It goes in an engine, okay? In a car? In a cab? Yeah, what part of a cab?

[17:17] That's okay. I'll give you that. This goes in an engine. Connects the top and the bottom of an engine, so there's cogs in the engine. Okay? I like my car, but I have one of these lying about, it's my next job.

Cogs in the engine, and this belt goes over the cogs, and it keeps everything turning. But everything has to be turning at the right time. And you have one of the cogs in the wrong place.

It keeps going engine kaput. Okay? But everything has to be timed perfectly. That's how I call it timed. So everything, all the boots of the engine, the bottom of the engine, the top of the engine, all worked to the right time, just as it was designed to do.

All the boots are turning, and all the wee bits are going up and down inside the engine. It's all very precise. It all has to just work together perfectly.

And here we have this. If you put this on wrong, even just by one wee bit, the end is probably going to be kaput. It's going to be a new engine.

[18:26] It's going to be a new engine. God's kind of like this timing bit.

God's in heaven working, but God's also on earth on the snow, just working. God's in heaven. It's connected. Everything.

Absolutely perfect. God's work is perfect in this world. And you look at the world, and everything's turning. Your cloths are turning. People are busy doing their own thing.

There's days when you're happy. There's days when you're sad. There's days when you're going up and down. You're changing. There's days when you're happy.

There's days when you're sad. going up and down, you're changing, it's warm and cold, just like an engine, all the boats are moving all the time and we're always moving about. But God has everything in control.

[19:30] God's perfectly tying in everything in our lives. Sometimes it's very hard to see. But you know, the most important thing I want you to remember, you know, the grown-ups need to remember this. God's in control. And when it's a day when we're feeling so happy, or whether it's a day when we're feeling really sad, God's in control. And that's a good thing.

Because we know that on the sad days, we remember actually God has planned this in our time. God works all these things for his purpose, in his design. So on the hard days, we can pray to God, and we can pray to God, God, I don't know why, but I know that it's part of your perfect timing, that you have done this today. And so we can pray, knowing that it's part of God's plan. And God's plan is good for us. God's plan is good. Everything is perfectly tanned in our life. Whether it's good or bad. And as we sing in a minute, knowing that God's in control, it gives us peace. As with something bad happens, it's very easy to get worried, isn't it? Isn't it? But we know that God's in control. Of every day, every year, no matter if the cross of our fall, the cross of our back, we know

I'm experiencing.

And that's the type of poetry we find in the book of Proverbs and in the passage that we've read this morning. So don't be surprised when abstract concepts are made concrete, often in vivid, quite unusual dramatic language, which has real emotional impact on our heart.

And in this chapter, chapter 9, expect to find a kaleidoscopic collection of images and pictures which help to convey to us the realities of the great invitation of God that appears right through the Bible.

Now this chapter comes at the end of the Bible.

Human characteristics are given to abstract concepts. And again, this helps us to understand the passage more easily. It's exactly the same as the style that I might use if I say to you, my alarm screams at me every morning at 6.30.

[40 : 45] I'm giving my alarm clock the characteristics of a human. Alarm clocks don't really scream. Humans scream, but my alarm screams at me every morning at 6.30.

Communicates something of my frustration with my alarm. Anyway, I want to look at the invitation under four headings. It took me some time to get them all with the same letter, but here we go.

So, who is the invitation from? So, when we get an invitation, one of the first things we look at is, who is this invitation from? And then we want to just check, is it really to us?

I mean, who is the invitation made to? What's the event that I've been invited to? What is the invitation about? And then finally, a response.

Do I have to reply to this invitation? So, that's the four headings I'm going to just guide our thoughts through. So, initially, who is the invitation from?

[41 : 48] Who is the author of this invitation? Well, in the poetic text before us, particularly in the first few verses, the hostess is given the name Lady Wisdom.

Wisdom. And she's built, the first thing we read is that she's built a house, a substantial house at that. And in a way, the preceding eight chapters have really described the contours of that house, its size, the different rooms, what those rooms are used for, its position, the quality of the house, even the value of the house.

So, a house has been built as the parent has taught the child about wisdom. And the summary statement is that wisdom has built her house.

She's presented the home in which she lives. But who is this person? Who is wisdom? Who is Lady Wisdom?

Well, this is a bit harder, but here we have an outline, perhaps a shadow, a hint, a faint picture, which becomes, as we read through the Bible, more and more defined and tangible and real as the story of Scripture evolves down the ages and finally presents before us the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul describes as the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[43 : 25] The power of God and the wisdom of God. That's how Paul describes Jesus. He also, in a letter to the church in Colossae, describes Jesus as the one in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

And so, really, when you take this chapter in the context of the wider span of Scripture, the wider span of the Bible, we're talking about Jesus making an invitation.

It's the invitation that he extended to all when he said, Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

We've been studying the book of Matthew on Sunday mornings, and that's at the end of Matthew 11. So, the invitation is really from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, who's on the guest list? Who is the audience of this invitation? Well, it's interesting to look at verse 3.

[44 : 36] The invitation is universally proclaimed and offered from the highest places in the town. So, everyone can hear this message, this invitation.

In the very last book of the Bible, we read the verses, Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. It's exactly the same message with slightly different words.

And it's proclaimed to all from the highest places so that all can hear. It's interesting in verse 4. It becomes a very personal and individualised message.

All the words are singular. It's directed to whoever is simple. Let him turn in here to him who lacks sense. It's an individual, personal message.

Yes, proclaimed to all, but individual to you and to me. It's interesting who this, the word that's used in verse 4, the word simple.

[45 : 43] This invitation is made to the simple. It's quite a difficult translation. And I've looked at lots of different translations of the Bible to see the way in which that word is translated.

And the fact that there are so many different translations indicates that it's quite difficult to just capture the meaning of that word. Some translations use the word naive. Some foolish, impressionable, unsure of themselves.

I think the best concept, I think, to understand who this message is directed to in the passage this morning is the concept of being open-minded.

Someone that hasn't really made a commitment as yet and is prepared to be influenced, to find out. Not with a closed mind, but with an open mind. Uncommitted person. And I think the other thing to say about the invitation that has come to us, it's an urgent message.

[46 : 44] It's an urgent invitation. Look at the first word of verse 5. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Come. There's a very well-known verse in the New Testament that says, Behold, now is the favourable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.

This is an urgent invitation that is before us. But what actually is the invitation? What's the agenda of the invitation? What's the event to which we've been invited?

Well, the picture before us, remember I talked about the concrete pictures in poetry. The picture is of a carefully, meticulously prepared, extravagant meal on a table.

Verse 2 particularly summarises that. That's the invitation. It's to a banquet, an extravagant feast that's been prepared for us.

[47 : 51] What does that mean, though? As we read through the following verses, there's concepts associated with what the food actually is.

Psalms 63, I got very mixed up with my psalms, as you found earlier. But Psalm 63 talks about our souls being satisfied with rich food.

And one of the things that the invitation promises is satisfaction and security and purpose for our lives. And this new life will be characterised by insight.

Look at verse 5. Leave your simple ways and live and walk in the way of insight. Sight instead of blindness. A couple of weeks ago, we were looking at the giving of sight to the blind in the life of Jesus as he progressed towards Jerusalem.

My new life, this new life will be characterised by insight. So instead of being aimless and without purpose, without security, the banquet promises insight.

[49 : 05] And the foundation of this new life, the foundation that's promised to people who come to Jesus, I guess it's the fundamental principle and starting place of all the sort of books about wisdom is what's called the fear of the Lord.

And that's in verse 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So when someone comes to the banquet, they begin to learn what it is to fear the Lord. I think we struggle with that, don't we?

Because we don't like fear. Fear in many senses is not a good thing. But fear of the Lord is a particular phrase that describes the attitude and the disposition of a person's heart before God.

I'm sure many of you will be familiar with the helpful picture in C.S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. And Lucy asks if Aslan, the lion, is safe she's encountering the lion and she is terrified initially.

And Mr. Beaver replies, Of course he isn't safe, but he is good. He's the king. And that captures something of the concept that yes, we're before a mighty God, but he is good.

[50 : 29] He is the king. His roar shakes the ground, causing characters to tremble. And yet his gaze brings comfort. His roar shakes the ground, causing characters to tremble.

Yet his gaze brings comfort. So that's what's on the table. That's the banquet to which we've been invited and the new life that is promised.

And right through the scriptures, we see this being described in different ways. In John's gospel, there's a fantastic verse, 10 verse 10. I came, this is Jesus talking, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

And that coheres with the first stanza of verse 6. Leave your simple ways and find life. Live. I've come that they might have life and have it in all its fullness is another translation.

And so at the bottom of many invitations, particularly wedding invitations, I guess, is RSVP. What's our response to the invitation that we see time and time again throughout the scripture?

[51 : 47] I think it's important to remember there is no cost to this invitation. There is no cost to us. There was a German guy many, many years ago at the same time as Luther that said the only thing that you contribute to your salvation is the sin that made it necessary.

There's a bit of a debate about who actually said that, but it's an interesting thought, isn't it? The only thing that we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary.

Also important, and this is perhaps the latter part of the chapter that we've read, as we think about how we respond, we're warned to beware of counterfeits and scams.

Every time I lift my phone now, I'm being told about the latest scam. I'm being warned about scams and to be careful not to open any attachments. Look at the similarities of folly, lady folly, in the last six verses of our chapter.

And there are interesting similarities to the first six verses that we looked at. So this person who is described as folly calls from the highest places of the town as well so that her voice is heard in the same way as the lady wisdom at the beginning.

[53 : 16] She calls from the highest places of the town. And even the initial words of her invitation are identical. Whoever is simple, let him turn and hear.

Identical words, but a very, very different promise. Yes, a feast is offered even by lady folly, and illicit fear giving initial pleasure, but ultimate death.

The New Testament talks about the fleeting pleasures of sin in Hebrews 11. And I think that's the idea here, that sin has sometimes an initial pleasure, but always results in problems and ultimately death.

Two, three chapters along in Proverbs, there's a verse that says, there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. There's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

And right through the New Testament, we see many, many comments made about other invitations that have a call in our life, things that we hear.

[54 : 32] And one of the famous ones is in the letter of 1 John, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life. Yes, there are competing invitations, but they are exclusive, mutually exclusive.

Ultimately, Lady Folly offers a feast, toasting death. And it's a very somber, final sentence in the chapter that we've read.

The person that takes up the offer of Lady Folly does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. One thing also, as we draw to a close, is to note in the invitation that there is a call to a word that we find in the Bible a lot, repentance.

And it's a sort of change in direction is a good way of thinking about it. And it's seen in verse 4 and verse 6, where the simple person is invited to turn from the direction that they're going in and leave their simple ways.

It involves the concept of going in a different direction. And that's really a very good definition of repentance, what it means to turn from our sin, from our previous way of life, and turn to follow Christ.

[56 : 12] But the invitation at the end of the day and the invitation that we see right through the Scriptures is simply to come to Jesus. And if you're not a Christian, just ponder that invitation again.

You're invited to come to a banquet. You're invited to receive forgiveness, to learn wisdom about how life should be lived.

Come to Jesus who said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

And if you are a Christian, the invitation remains open to continue feasting. We often forget that the words of Revelation 3.20 were actually said to churchgoers like you and me, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me. That was a word of Jesus to churchgoers in Laodicea.

[57 : 26] So, the way of wisdom. Wisdom has built our house and invites us to an amazing banquet. A banquet which will change our lives, give us new direction, walking in the way of insight, learning the fear of the Lord, and becoming one of his children.

So, let me pray. Let's pray. Our Father, thank you for the invitation extended to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, quietly in these moments, we come to him to receive forgiveness and new life, to listen to him, and to seek to follow him in every area of our lives.

Amen. So, we're going to close our service this morning by singing from Mission Praise.

Now, I will try and get the right number here. 327, Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. I'm so pleased to see coherence between what I've said and the screen.

[58 : 39] So, Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise.

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. I'm so pleased to see coherence in the way of insight, So, we're going to close our eyes, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise. Most blessed, most glorious, the ancient of days, Almighty, victorious, thy reigning with grace.

Unresting, unresting, and hastening, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, the cruelest in might.

Thy justice, thy mountains, thy storm in the path, thy first wish, which are mountains, of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small, in all life thou rivers, the true life of all.

[60 : 30] We've lost a band flourish, that bleeds on the tree, and wither and perish, but not changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, dear Father of light, thy angels adore thee, all railing their sight.

For all we would render, O help us to see, Tis only the splendour, of light thy death thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only Wise, in light, in access, and made from our eyes.

O blessed, most glorious, the ancient of days, almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

[62 : 01] And now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen. Amen. Amen.