

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Papa Owusu. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Call to Worship

Come and worship the living God – and the Saviour of the world.
Come and worship the one who died – and was raised again.
Come and worship the Spirit who renews and empowers us to be God's people and to offer him our thanks, our praise, and our worship. **Amen**

Hymn: O for a heart to praise my God (StF 507)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FyAY9fzcnU>

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free!
A heart that always feels Thy blood
So freely spilt for me!

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My dear Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

A humble, lowly, contrite, heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within.

A heart in every thought renewed
And full of love divine,
Perfect and right and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of Love.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer

Let us pray

Lord, it is a joy to be in your presence,
It is an awesome experience to know you as the living God.
Though you hold all creation in your hands
You promised to hold us in your love.
Though you are great enough to inhabit eternity
You have promised to live in the hearts and lives of those who
put their trust in you.

Though you are worshipped by all the host of heaven
You have promised to receive the worship of broken, contrite hearts.

Lord, we come as your people made one in Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

We remember that you meant us to live in harmony with you and with each other.

May the worship we offer be a celebration of our fellowship in you.

Break down the barriers we erect against each other and remove the difficulties we encounter as we approach a deeper trust, peace and love between us.

Make your presence known to us, and let our prayers draw us closer to you. May your presence bring us joy, and may our worship be empowered by the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Today's reading: Luke 14:1, 7-14 (NRSVA)

Jesus Heals the Man with Dropsy

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

Humility and Hospitality

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable. 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, "Give this person your place", and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, "Friend, move up higher"; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'

He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

Hymn: Let us build a house where love can dwell (StF 409).

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTdxFRfEoMs>

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive;
built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space,
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

Time to Reflect

In the last couple of weeks, with the lenses of St Luke, we have encountered Jesus Christ as being counter-cultural in different ways, and his actions could be deciphered as counterintuitive if you do not have a real vision of the ways of God's wise kingdom as demonstrated in Jesus Christ himself.

Last week, in our reading from Luke 13: 10ff, we saw Jesus courting trouble for himself for healing a woman who had been crippled for many years in the synagogue on the Sabbath. In today's story from Luke Chapter 14, we find him again on the Sabbath as an invitee to a dinner where he was carefully watched. In this instance, too, we see him challenging the behaviour of the host and the other guests after he had healed the man who had dropsy. This time he tackles the issue of true humility and hospitality by using two powerful stories: parables of the wedding feast and the great banquet.

Jesus, through the parables, is fastidiously telling them and us not to yearn for personal glorification by seeking one's honour but rather humble ourselves so that God may exalt us at the right time. The seating at the wedding feast image being used in the story can be transferred easily to every aspect of our everyday lives. Jesus is probably saying that instead of jockeying for positions, let us manifest humility in all our interactions with others and in every situation and even consider others more significant than us.

Who do we value in our society?

What is genuine humility? Is it being able to see ourselves as God does? How do we cultivate a humility that is real and powerful?

Jesus also teaches them what genuine hospitality looks like. He makes it clear in the passage that it is giving without expecting anything in return... So, in doing this, you do not invite those who can return the same gesture but those who cannot repay you. For Jesus, genuine hospitality and generosity are devoid of exclusion. Everyone is invited.

What does it mean for us?

What does the passage say about our attitudes and habits of hospitality?

Who might we invite to share meals with us in our churches and, more importantly, in our homes?

In today's reading, St Luke portrays Jesus again challenging the status quo and acting at variance with the prevailing social norms. He was inviting the people to live with humility in a society where humility was hardly considered a virtue. He then challenges the banqueting system and clarifies that those who are usually excluded must be given priority.

Jesus did not only teach humility and hospitality. He also modelled them, and we should also see ourselves as placed here

on earth to exude that spirit of humility and hospitality. The spirit of humility and inclusion is the hallmark of being followers of Christ. And in the words of Apostle Paul,

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1-11, NRVSA)

We live in a world now where many people have been displaced through wars, persecution, climate change, poverty and many more. There are many refugees, people in distress and

desperation, people who have lost everything and have nowhere to go...

Are we able to make our communities safe places of welcome to those who need our support?

Are we humbling enough to learn lessons in hospitality from them?

In our church, who's in the 'in-crowd' and who's on the fringe? Do we prioritise some people over others, even in God's family?

There is always a blessing for those who offer genuine hospitality. Jesus says as per the reading from St Luke says: 'for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just' (Luke 14:14). James notes that God opposes the proud but loves and blesses the humble (James 4:6), and he is faithful to lift them up in his own timing. **Amen**

A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)

Lord God, we bring before you those who feel that they are on the outside of life just looking in; those with no home, no food and no future; those with no hope, no joy, no love; those with no courage, no strength and no purpose; those with no laughter, no joy and no tears. May we have the spirit of humility and generosity to respond to their needs and to seek more and new ways to support those who need our help in our communities.

Lord God, we pray for all people struggling to make ends meet due to the escalating cost of living, which affects us all. May your Spirit inspire those who have more to see how they can help.

We pray for the worldwide Church of Christ to review its mission in these unprecedented times so that your justice may be clearly seen throughout the world.

We pray for leaders of all nations that they may have the wisdom to lead in the ways of justice and peace and seek the common good of all.

We pray for all those who suffer that they may know your comfort and experience your healing in body, mind or spirit.

We remember all those who are at rest from their labours and have entered your eternal glory; bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers and other prayers of your saints for the sake of your Son and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his disciples and us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn: Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord (StF 186)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0>

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word –
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same –
his holy name: the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure:
tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

*Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)
Based on the Magnificat*

Blessing

May the Love of the Father enfold you,
May the wisdom of the enlighten you,
May the fire of the Spirit enflame you;
and the blessing of God, the Three in One, be upon you and
abide with you now and forever. **Amen**

Go in the spirit of humility and generosity to love and serve the
Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen

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