

# Alton Baptist Church e-Service 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021

## A matter of priority

### **Opening Prayer:**

Let us begin our worship with a short prayer.

Our Lord and Father we come to you to worship you and the Lord Jesus and to learn from your word and draw near to you. Help us then in our time of worship to put aside all unnecessary thoughts from our everyday life and concentrate on the Lord Jesus and his words and deeds.

We will now remember who Jesus is in our first hymn.

**Song:** 560 Praise, my soul the King of heaven  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

### **Prayers of Praise:**

Let us spend a little time in worshipful prayer.

Dear Lord we are so glad that we can speak to you wherever we are. We thank you for the greatness of our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ and we do want to worship Him. Thank you that He is the King of Heaven and that one day we will see Him as King of everything.

Please add your own prayers.

**Song:** 790 You are the King of glory  
[https://youtu.be/MiXfvEA\\_Ysg](https://youtu.be/MiXfvEA_Ysg)

### **Intercessory Prayer:**

Let us spend time in intercessory prayers.

We can remember Jane Cain's family as they prepare for her funeral and give thanks for her Christian life.

We can remember friends and members of our family some of whom may have problems or are just finding things difficult.

We should remember all who provide for our safety and supply our physical needs.  
I am sure there are many other things on our minds including this covid pandemic.

**Song:** 94 Come let us sing of a wonder love,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fJ2hiATs2s>

**Reading:** Luke 14: 12 - 24

<sup>12</sup> Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

**The Parable of the Great Banquet**

<sup>15</sup> When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

<sup>18</sup> "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

<sup>19</sup> "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

<sup>20</sup> "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

<sup>21</sup> "The servant came back and reported this to his master. 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, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

<sup>22</sup> "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

<sup>23</sup> "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. <sup>24</sup> I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

## **Some Thoughts:**

Jesus is at a dinner and it is interesting to read that at least one of the people present heard what Jesus had said and was moved by it. He thought how wonderful it would be to be there in the kingdom of God. Lots of people talk like that today.

Jesus then told a story which is as true today as it was then. A man invited lots people to a very special feast. We can assume they accepted the invitation, but when the great day came things were very different. The host had prepared everything and even sent servants to remind his guests and escort them to dinner. When the servants brought the reminder they found that nobody was ready to come. Not only were they not ready but had other things that seemed more important to them.

One had bought a field and now wanted to see it. It sounds a bit feeble to me. He should have looked at it before buying and now it can surely wait a day or two before viewing it again. We see a man who was so interested in his property that he had no time for his friend's invitation.

Another had bought some oxen and he must now try them out. This seems like another case where the guest was not really interested in the invitation.

The third had just got married. Marriage customs and arrangements were different then but we can be quite sure that if the guest had really wanted to come he could have arranged things to make it possible.

Jesus is telling this story to illustrate that many people say that their eternal future is important but decide to give priority to all sorts of other things. They may be business or property, or pleasure or personal relationships, but there is no real time for Jesus and God's word. We need to challenge ourselves sometimes, but we can see this in others too. How often have I had friends or colleagues, who I like and admire, but they have no time for Jesus in their lives.

If this was all there was to the story it would have a very sad ending, but for some at least it was wonderful. The host was still going to have his banquet. He sent his servants to bring in the destitute and disabled from the streets. His original guests would have called them the riff raff, but Jesus wanted us to know that God cares about all kinds of people.

There weren't enough of them so His servants were sent out into the country lanes to bring in more people.

Jesus wanted us to know that He cares about all kinds of people and He wants them to come into blessing.

If we had read on, Jesus turns to the ordinary people who probably had not been invited to the dinner Jesus was at. They may well have been thrilled to hear his story as they listened in through windows and open doors. At least I picture it like that. He then tells them that though the invitation is for all it requires a serious commitment from those who wish to accept it. It changes the way we live and relate to others. This may create difficulties and we see that in the time of the early church it did.

Many Christians in the world today suffer persecution because of their commitment to Jesus. It is a challenge for us, but we learn from the New Testament that God, through his spirit, wants to be involved in our lives so that we can meet these challenges. I am often very moved when I hear Christians who have gone through awful things telling of how precious Jesus is to them. I don't know whether we will ever face any more than minor inconvenience through knowing Jesus, but we should ask ourselves from time to time as to where our priorities lie.

I want to leave this challenge with you; also the question, in these difficult times, of where our hope lies.

**Song:** 1072 In Christ alone

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENTL\\_li4GbE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENTL_li4GbE)

### **Optional Communion**

If you wish to include communion as part of your worship, find yourself some bread and wine (or juice) and click on this link - (It includes a worship song at 8:10 into the video).

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na33U\\_QaEGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=na33U_QaEGQ)

May the blessing of Christ rest upon us all as we enter a new week

Graham