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ORDINARY 28A

11th October 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Take time to read this prayer:

God of all creation,

I worship you.

You know me: what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me: as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me: when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me: here and now and I am content.

God of all creation

I worship you.

Amen.

Wonder to yourself if you are really able to say the words. Imagine what it would be like to hear someone else say them for you. Notice how you feel as you read them. Take time to tell God what you've discovered

Then when you are ready and if you feel able say them aloud:

God of all creation,

I worship you.

You know me: what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me: as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me: when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me: here and now and I am content.

God of all creation

I worship you.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 22:1-14 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Today's reading begins with a wonderfully generous image: a king throwing a wedding banquet. There is food, there is celebration, there is an invitation. And yet, almost immediately, things go horribly wrong.

The invited guests refuse to come. Some make excuses, others become violent. The king responds with violence of his own. And then the invitation is thrown open to anyone who can be found, "both good and bad", until the wedding hall is full. And just when we think we

might have arrived at a lovely story about God's radically inclusive welcome, the gospel writer gives us the uncomfortable final scene: someone arrives without a wedding garment and is thrown out.

It is a strange, unsettling parable, but perhaps that is partly the point.

We can be tempted to turn Jesus' parables into neat moral lessons, but sometimes they are more like stones thrown into still water. They disturb us. They make us ask questions we would rather avoid. One question this story raises is about who gets invited. The original guests assume that the banquet is for them. They have their reasons for declining, their priorities, their certainty that there will always be another invitation.

The king, however, eventually sends the servants out to the crossroads and tells them to invite whoever they find. Not the deserving. Not the respectable. Not the people who have ticked the right boxes. But, instead: everyone they can find.

It is a beautiful picture of grace: God's invitation is not restricted to the people we think belong at the table. And yet perhaps the most challenging thing about the story is that the people who were eventually invited aren't described as being particularly good.

They are simply invited, both good and bad. Which might be the beating heart of the gospel: we never earn our place at God's table by becoming sufficiently 'good' Christians (whatever that means). We do not have to arrive having sorted everything out. We do not have to possess perfect faith, impeccable behaviour or all the right answers.

We are invited because God is generous, but then what do we make of the wedding garment?

Perhaps it can be read as a reminder that grace is not simply about receiving an invitation; it is about allowing that invitation to change us. There is a danger in treating inclusion as the end of the story. God welcomes us as we are, but God's love is not content to leave us exactly as we are.

Grace asks something of us:

- If we have been welcomed, can we become welcoming?
- If we have received forgiveness, can we become forgiving?
- If we have been given a place at the table, can we make sure there is room for somebody else?

The Christian life is not about proving that we deserve to be at the banquet. It is about discovering that we are already loved. and then learning how to live as people who know that love.

There is also a warning here for the church. We can become remarkably good at deciding who is properly dressed for the banquet, at who 'fits in' with our expectations, our theology, our cultural background and accepted norms.

And yet Jesus' story begins with an invitation that keeps getting wider. The people who thought they had secured their place discover that they have misunderstood the nature of the invitation. Meanwhile, strangers from the crossroads find themselves unexpectedly sitting at the feast.

Perhaps the question for us is not, 'Who deserves to be here?' Perhaps it is: 'Who haven't we thought to invite?'

There will always be people standing at the crossroads: people who assume that church isn't for them, faith isn't for them, that they have somehow missed the invitation. Some may have been told explicitly that they are not welcome. Others may simply have absorbed the message through years of exclusion, judgement or indifference.

What would happen if we went looking for them? What would happen if our churches became places where people didn't have to become like us before they could belong? And what would happen if we trusted that God's table was big enough for all of us?

This parable leaves us with uncomfortable questions because grace is wonderfully indiscriminate, and we are often much more selective. God's invitation keeps reaching beyond the boundaries we draw, beyond the assumptions we make. The invitation is wider than we imagine.

Perhaps discipleship begins when we stop asking whether other people deserve a place at the table, and start asking how we can help set it.

So, you might like to use these questions to prompt your thinking, prayer or a conversation this week:

- Who do I instinctively think is 'not my kind of person'?
- Where might I be putting conditions on God's welcome?
- How has God's grace changed me, rather than simply comforted me?
- Who is standing at the crossroads waiting for an invitation, and how might I help extend it?

Hymn / Song

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

May you never forget that we come to God's table not because you have earned your place, but because love has invited you. May that grace soften your judgements, widen your welcome and transform the way you live. And may you become people who do not merely enjoy the feast, but keep pulling up chairs for others.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 12th October

- Holy God, healing and loving God,
Today we pray for all involved in the work of hospitals, GP surgeries and healthcare in this country, and around the world.
Thank you for their work in helping others to stay healthy and to mend the brokenness of our bodies and minds.
- Come, by your Spirit, O God. Amen.

Tuesday 13th October

- Today is the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, which highlights the important work happening around the world in helping communities and nation states prepare for climate disasters, and help to mitigate their impacts on human life.
- You can find out more, and support All We Can's Disaster Risk Reduction work here: allwecan.org.uk/appeals/emergency-relief-fund
- Today you might like to pray for all those doing this work and give thanks for lives they are saving in doing so.

Wednesday 14th October

- On this day in 1933, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and the World Disarmament Conference, as the Nazi Party took power and Europe was put on a course that led to the Second World War.
- Today, you might like to pray for all the institutions and people involved in trying to keep the world a peaceful place, all those working to negotiate peace and seek to end conflict.

Thursday 15th October

- Today is marked in some traditions as the feast day of Teresa of Avila, a nun, Spanish mystic and spiritual reformer from the 16th century.
- She contributed a lot to Christian mysticism and meditative prayer. You might like to use today as an opportunity to meditate and reflect on how God is speaking to you today.
- What methods of prayer work most reliably for you? Make some notes and talk to trusted friends about your thoughts.

Friday 16th October

- On this day in 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in solidarity with the Black Power movement whilst on the podium at the Olympic Games. They were kicked off the team for this action and caused much division and uproar.
- Nearly 60 years later, however, their gesture continues to inspire others to stand up to injustice and particularly to work towards an anti-racist, inclusive society.
- That work is still on going, may your prayers and your actions continue to play a part in bringing justice to our unjust world.

Saturday 17th October

- Take a moment to be still today.
In the stillness, listen for the sounds of the world around you: how is nature speaking to you today? How might the Spirit of God be communicating through those sounds and rhythms?