

Sunday 15 October 2023
The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

Collect:

Faithful Lord,
whose steadfast love never ceases
and whose mercies never come to an end:
grant us the grace to trust you
and to receive the gifts of your love,
new every morning,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 25:1-9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14

The feast we meet in the first reading from the earlier part of Isaiah is God's banquet for all people and nations, it is not confined to only residents of Israel and Judah. It is part of God's faithfulness to plans formed of old, mentioned in the opening verse and reiterated in verse 9, which bring hope, sustenance, protection to those in the greatest need. The prophet praises God's faithfulness, rejoicing in the gift of salvation that is offered. Psalm 23 reflects the same themes of divine faithfulness and abundance given to bring hope to those who have travelled through dark places. Both passages also acknowledge that discipline is required of us if we are to follow the path God has laid out for us. In the Psalm, God's rod and staff are necessary to keep us on the true way. In Isaiah, destruction comes to the cities that make life intolerable for the distressed.

Paul closes his letter to his dearly beloved Philippian church with a note of discipline and of thanksgiving. In a situation replicated in many churches across time and place, two stalwart workers – Euodia and Syntyche – have fallen out, perhaps over an issue related to mission. Paul urges them to find common ground in their faith and to prioritise gentleness over conflict, doing whatever is true, honourable, pure, etc., as that is the way that the Gospel will come alive in lives, homes and communities.

In the Gospel we return to God's banquet of abundance that is open to all, from every nation, not just the chosen people. In terms very similar to last week's reading concerning the tenants of the vineyard who killed their master's messengers, we hear of ungrateful subjects rejecting their king's invitation to a wedding feast. When the messengers are killed, the king takes drastic action. Those initially invited no longer have a place at the table. The invitation is sent out to a much wider clientele, however, despite its graciousness, it comes with responsibilities. As Paul reminds Euodia and Syntyche, accepting the Gospel means adhering to its standards and dressing your behaviour, your attitude and your spirit accordingly.

Holy and blessed God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of your Son
and filled us with your Holy Spirit:
may we honour you,
not only with our lips but in lives dedicated
to the service of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

Isaiah 35:3-6; Psalm 147:1-7; Acts 16:6-12a; Luke 10:1-9
Luke the Evangelist