

Worship at Home Sunday January 17th 2021

Good morning and welcome to our latest Worship at Home.

Today's theme is something of an invitation as its title is, *Come, see, hear* and immediately I began to think about what that actually means.

Where does the invitation come from?

Who makes the invitation – and are they acting on their own or on behalf of someone else?

Why do we make a specific invitation – is it for the benefit of another or ourselves?

And finally, do we need to consider if we need that same invitation extended once again?

The word *Invitation* then prevented me moving forward, until I decided on a Google search for some appropriate words or poem on this idea only to find I was led to poems for weddings and poems about being invited to something. It didn't fit ... but then, what does that say?

Is there a danger in making too much of this idea – should we just extend an invitation and wait?

We meet together, welcomed but without requiring a formal invitation and we hear these words.

“Come with me across the breakers,”

Says a voice from a storm far away,

“And I'll torment you with roses

And the light of wide lands far away,

And the mirth of a fairer cay.

“Should your ship founder on the ocean,

What of it? May your heart be at ease;

The emerald mansions of my realm

Are deep in the beryl seas,

Deep under the weeping seas.

*“If your body be borne to the coastline
All wet on its foamy white bier,
Your spirit can live on in the depths
Like the moon in the depths of the mere,
Like a shaft of sunlight in the mere.*

*“So raise up your sails now, and follow
Don’t stay in so foolish a world;
You can sail to a golden summer time
With your hair flying behind you unfurled,
Like a black flag behind you unfurled.*

*“Behold across the Atlantic’s wave
An Eden all shining and bright,
Where the roses linger among the grass
Lie sweet sundials of love’s delight,
Like happy priests of love’s delight. (1)*

**We sing or read our first hymn today, Will you come and follow me,
sung to the tune Kelvingrove.**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_usEqWe4nA

Will you come and follow me,
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don’t know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare
should your live attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.

In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow

In you and you in me (2)

Let us pray

God you invite us to join with you,
In a dance of delight,
in a divine embrace of exuberant love;
in a symphony of sublime sounds.
So long as you orchestrate our each move – we are content;
so long as your plan unfolds as you desire – we can follow;
so long as order prevails – we are at ease.

Eternal God, stir us from the point of contentment;
remind us of the challenge of your call to each one of us;
that you promise to be with us, wherever that may be;
but that as your wandering, travelling race ... we need to be
ever watchful,
ever alert,
ever obedient.

Speak to us once again the words of invitation;
as familiar as our very breath,
as new as each new day.
Forgive us when our enthusiasm wanes,
or other priorities seem to want to prevail.
Forgive us if we think ourselves unworthy of your invitation;
Remind us of the all-embracing nature of your love,
And the unique worth of each one of us in your sight.
Amen.

The set readings for today are 1 Samuel, chapter 3 verses 1-10, Psalm 139 verses 1-6 & 13-18, the 1st letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6 verses 12-20 and finally the gospel which is John chapter 1 verses 43-51 which can be found below and is our focus today.

Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael.

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man."

Come, see, hear.

The Revd. Dr. John Morgans was the Moderator of Wales when I was growing up.

The family lived in a house in a 'nice' area of Cardiff.

John shocked the Synod by announcing his intention to move house, Both in that he could leave the 'nice' area

But also when he announced where he intended to move to -

With reference to a call received to ministry post-Moderator
he moved to Penrhys.

A huge housing estate.

A melting-pot of every social problem imaginable at the time.

The Synod was shocked – how could he move?

Why would he want to move?

To all the comments and questions John replied with the quiet grace
for which he is known, “Come and see for yourself.”

Today the Penrhys project tells its own story, and John and Norah Morgans
are a big part of that,

a big part of changing attitudes, when attitudes seemed entrenched,

a big part of making plans, when plans seemed pointless.

a big part of bringing hope, when hope seemed hopeless.

John was in many ways an unusual choice as a Moderator,
he loathed Committees,

and the URC Manual was not likely to occupy a space on his bookshelf;

but like another John centuries before him – he was a visionary

and it was always about the love of God being shown to those

who thought it wasn't for them.

The stories of the ‘great and the good’ and URC student ministers who
visited are legendary; Prince Charles and the ham from the Spar long sticks
in my mind.

Come, see, hear.

Come to the place which was once a place of pilgrimage,

See what remains of the holy shrine of Our Lady,

Hear the stories of the effects of the English Reformation, the Industrial
Reformation and the various resettlement programme and modern
initiatives.

Come, see, hear.

As Nathaniel asked, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

So too was the question asked of Penrhys.
As Philip answered with an invitation,
so too have the people of Penrhys responded in the same way.
As Jesus saw what God could use in the man who stood before him,
so too did God look at Penrhys and planned its future.
Come, see, hear.

Think of the conversation between Jesus and Nathanael,
Until this point the disciples had declared they
“had found the Messiah”,
but this is different –
Nathanael is a challenge,
he makes a challenge,
and his prejudice could be a stumbling block.
The word see in Greek means more than simply a glance given;
in Greek, to see is to understand.
Come, understand, hear.

We all carry pre-conceived ideas,
we are all guilty of listening to a ‘bad press’
which follows an individual
or a community judged, convicted and forgotten.
There is something of a ‘Nathanael’ in us all.
This week Jack Monroe mobilised her Twitter followers
to round on those contracted to feed children during this current lockdown,
and hold them to account for the scraps of food they thought sufficient.
The photos of what was sent were heart-breaking,
one Mother asked “Do I not deserve dignity?”

Don’t just assume – understand.
Don’t just see – understand.

Be more Philip – less Nathanael.
Amen.

We sing or read our next hymn *I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship*, the tune is Londonderry Air (better known as Danny Boy)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAr8YTC7JYc>

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the human race,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back within the fold of grace.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlehem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of East and West, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all the hearts on earth with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
at last the saviour, Saviour of the world, is King! (3)

Let us pray

Lord of all,
Into the brokenness of the world – you came.
Into the brokenness of the world – you come;
The muddled mess of these moments
seems magnified each day;
the need swamps us;
where to begin?

As the news of vaccines offered gathers pace,
we pray for those in our communities who have received it:
and those who still wait.
We pray for those who have distributed it,
a vaccine of hope;
a vaccine of promise.
As we pray for them, so too we remember once again
those fighting the virus
and those families who are grieving the loss
of a loved one.

In these difficult days,
compounded by isolation,
and minds that seem unable to ‘switch off,’
we pray for calm, for patience

and understanding.

We know this time will pass

And we pray for the strength

That will keep us going.

We think once again

of events in other countries,

specifically America –

we pray for the incoming administration

knowing its task is great,

and it cannot afford to make mistakes –

because the consequences would be grave.

We pray for unity,

for ears that listen,

for hearts that will be open,

for hands that will reach out across the divide.

Lord of love,

We come before you,

knowing we need to see with eyes that are open,

knowing we need to hear all that is said – and unsaid.

Help us at this time to keep going,

To look to you as our guide and our inspiration,

our hope and our inspiration,

our Saviour and our Lord.

Amen.

Ideas for this week

1. Think of past invitations – were they welcomed, a surprise, what did they lead to? Recall an unexpected invitation, did it have any impact on you? Then think of times you have issued invitations; did you select the recipient, did you feel obliged in any way, and in both senses did you feel there was any form of power or responsibility at play?

2. Consider again the words ‘Come, understand, hear.’ How does that idea differ from ‘Come, see, hear?’
3. Invitations to actual events / occasions are still on hold, and likely to be for some time. Consider how, this week you could reach out to another individual and what may you offer ... and then put it into practice.
4. This coming week sees the start of The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021, the CTBI web site offers many resources to enable this to happen differently (and safely) this year. The work produced is an invitation from a part of our worldwide Church, an invitation to learn something new. Is it an invitation you accept and commit to this week?

Blessing

As you go:

Take Jesus in your hearts,
To offer his love to the loveless;
Take God in your minds,
To speak His peace to the restless;
Take the Holy Spirit in your lives,
To live in his power’
For the sake of our Lord,
And for all those he would reach
Through you.
Amen. (4)

- 1. The inviting by Hedd Wyn (Ellis Evans)*
- 2. Written by John Bell and Graham Maule*
- 3. Written by W Y Fullerton*
- 4. From Moods and Images by Duncan Tuck*