

Sunday 8th November - Remembrance - Rev Elizabeth Kirova

STF 65 Sing of the Lord's goodness

1 Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom,
come to him and bless his name.
Mercy he has shown us, his love is forever, faithful to the end of days.

*Come then, all you nations,
sing of your Lord's goodness,
melodies of praise and thanks to God.
Ring out the Lord's glory,
praise him with your music,
worship him and bless his name.*

2 Power he has wielded, honour is his garment, risen from the snares of death.

His word he has spoken, one bread he has broken, new life he now gives to all.

3 Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow, Spirit of our God most high ; solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner, splendour of the living God.

4 Praise him with your singing, praise him with the trumpet, praise God with the lute and harp ; praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your dancing, praise God till the end of days.

Ernest Sands (b. 1949)

Lord's prayer

Reading Matthew 25:1-13

This parable feels as though it was written for today, with its image of postponement. We are waiting for our freedom and we thought we were ready to get into this new way of life and now we hear it is delayed again. Jesus is describing the Kingdom of Heaven, as a groom to come and fetch the bride.

Now the culture in which I was married, this is a very connectable image. The idea is that the bride would be having a party at her house and the groom would be doing so at his. When the groom was ready, he would then head over to the bride's house and on the way there would be dancing and music, all his friends would follow and when he got close enough to the house the bride's friends and family would join in the celebrations, until finally getting to the door to pay his way in. My groom only had to travel from the hall to a room off the hall, but for some their brides are further away. It would take time to get to the bride and in Jesus' time there were no cars to speed up the process. So, I can understand why the groom in this parable was running a bit late.

When first reading this, I found myself feeling slightly annoyed by the bridesmaids. They have been given a title and a role in this parable. They are not like the people in the parable of the wedding feast, that were called last minute to come to a wedding. These people are bridesmaids. They have a specific job, and if I remember rightly, even if they have never been a bridesmaid before, there is always someone on hand to tell them what is to be done. So why aren't half of them ready? I have a similar reaction when trying to get up for school each morning. Everyone knows what time we need to be leaving and yet we can never leave at the same time and end up running despite living two minutes away! I am someone who likes to be prepared, I was brought up with the philosophy get your homework done first then you can play. Be as ready for the next day as possible, then you don't have so much to worry about. It doesn't always happen as you do need to have a balance with

enjoying the moment and being miles ahead. Faith can be like this as well. With times when you are completely on top of your prayer life and are reading and engaging with lots of current topics and then have times when you just 'let go and let God' (to use someone else's words.) Yet in either moment, I feel we are still called to stay alert.

Jesus tells a lot of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven and I used to get a bit worried about the fact that half of the bridesmaids were shut out of the wedding. But there is the need to hear and understand these parables together and not just on their own. The Kingdom of Heaven is not just one thing with hard and fast rules. Yet in each parable of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are continually called to integrity, to being in a real relationship with God, which might have its hitches, yet if we come at it, as though we are trying to make a special, memorable day. We cannot be excluded from the celebrations.

So, in this time of unexpected delay, stay alert, be ready for the coming bridegroom. Remember the title and job you have been given by God and keep being ready to do it, for you have an important part in the Kingdom of Heaven.

11am silence

So we are called to keep alert, to be ready, to be prepared and one of the preparations we can make is to pray.

Praying for those who are involved in conflict:

- Those who fight
- Their families
- Those who are caught up in the fighting
- Those who live in fear
- Those who know, no different

We pray for peace

Pray for those who are on our hearts:

- Those who are in hospital
- Those recovering at home
- Those in restricted areas of the country
- Those who are fearful of what is next
- All generations with their challenges

We confess:

- That we are sometimes slow to respond
- That we are not as prepared as we could be
- That we don't always feel certain in you
- That we don't always feel certain in ourselves
- That we find it hard to forgive and be forgiven

We give thanks

- For our families
- For our friends
- Our neighbours
- For those that support us

- For everything that we have
- For this world
- For God's rich love

STF 188 There's a light upon the mountain

1 There's a light upon the mountains,
and the day is at the spring,
when our eyes shall see the beauty and
the glory of the King ;
weary was our heart with waiting, and the
night-watch seemed so long ;
but his triumph-day is breaking, and we
hail it with a song.

2 There's a hush of expectation, and a
quiet in the air ;
and the breath of God is moving in the
fervent breath of prayer :
for the suffering, dying Jesus is the Christ
upon the throne,
and the travail of our spirit is the travail of
his own.

Henry Burton (1840–1930)

3 He is breaking down the barriers, he is
casting up the way ;
he is calling for his angels to build up the
gates of day :
but his angels here are human, not the
shining hosts above ;
for the drum-beats of his army are the
heart-beats of our love.

4 Hark ! We hear a distant music, and it
comes with fuller swell ;
'tis the triumph-song of Jesus, of our King,
Immanuel :
Zion, go now forth to meet him ; and, my
soul, be swift to bring
all your finest and your noblest for the
triumph of our King !

Blessing

Go now, and follow in the footsteps
of those who have gone before us in Christ.
Revere the Lord.
Serve God in sincerity and faithfulness.
Teach those who come after you to trust in God.

And may God protect you along the way;
May Christ Jesus keep you alert and prepared;
And may the Holy Spirit fuel the lamp that guides your path.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.