

Unwelcome - Grace Feb 2017

Take 1...

Unwelcome

God is here
His Spirit is with us
(But not with them)

We live in troubled times. Our enemies press in on every side. We need to stay true to our faith and our God and not be deceived by those who seem to be welcoming to all. We will be overrun and the purity of our faith will get watered down. This happened to the Israelites.

I have commissioned an icon for the God of our times which I'd like to unveil.
listen to the word of the Lord.

Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance,
the whole earth as your possession.
You will break them with an iron rod
and smash them like clay pots. Ps 2:8-9

Arise, O lord!
Rescue me, my God!
Slap all my enemies in the face! Ps 3:7

O my God, scatter them like tumbleweed,
like chaff before the wind!
As a fire burns a forest
and as a flame sets mountains ablaze,
chase them with your fierce storm;
terrify them with your tempest.
Utterly disgrace them
until they submit to your name, O lord. Ps 83: 13-16

Light three candles in the name of
God the protector, God the chief of heaven's armies and the defending spirit

Song:

Excluding God
Excluding God
You love me
but not my neighbour
Excluding god

Unwelcoming God
Unwelcoming God
Close the door
Ring fence the table
Unwelcoming god

Unwelcome everyone!

Take 2...

God the Creator is a gracious, abundant and generous host
You are invited to be guests at God's table
Make yourself at home
Relax
God is here
You are welcome

We live in troubled times. Originally the theme of tonight's Grace was planned to be love but it seemed that as God's people it would be dishonest not to name what is going on in our world at the moment. Many of us are troubled at the rise of nationalism, the building of walls literal and metaphorical between one human and another (no doubt because of fear), whether because of where they are from, their race, their skin colour, their religion, their sexuality, their beliefs.

What is particularly painful is that God's name is being invoked as in favour of this way of world making. We are after all made in the image of God. What God is that? The god of Unwelcome? The image of Unwelcome?

So tonight we aren't feeling particularly polite or neutral or that it is possible for our faith to not engage with all of life including the politics of unwelcome or the politics of embrace. Along with the God of unwelcome or the God of embrace. Tonight is a mix of prayers, readings, songs, space, conversation and sharing bread and wine at Christ's table. Which God do we serve and how I wonder? In whose image are we made?

We have another icon made by artist Meg Wroe which is simply stunning. Unveil the icon

Listen to the words of Jesus:
'Who needs a doctor? The healthy or the sick?
I'm here to invite outsiders not coddle insiders'

'The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side'

'Are you tired? worn out? burned out on religion?
come to me....'

And the words of Paul:
'You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here'

Blow out the candles and then relight with these words...

Gracious God
You have shared with us the gift of Creation
Open our hearts to receive you here

Jesus Friend of Sinners
You have shared with us the gift of your Incarnation
Open our hearts to receive you here

Spirit of God
You have shared with us the gift of life
Open our hearts to receive you here

Song:

Welcoming God
Welcoming God
An open home
and a holy table
Welcoming God

Enfleshing God
Enfleshing God
Jesus Christ
and his welcome
Enfleshing god

Accepting God
Accepting God
Grace and care
heal rejection
Accepting god

Embracing God
Embracing God
In the poor
and the stranger
Embracing God

Welcoming God
Welcoming God
An open home
and a holy table
Welcoming God

Discussion in groups -

How are you feeling about the world's events - this country and USA in particular?

Where do you go in the bible to make sense of what's happening?

Do God's people worship a God of welcome to all or a God who looks after their tribe and nation?

Discuss... feedback...

Prayer and confession:

Invite you to pray for our world by lighting candles

Confession that there is an oppressor in each of us as well as a liberator

God help us to change

To change ourselves and our world

To know the need for it

To deal with the pain of it

To feel the joy of it

To undertake the journey without understanding the destination

The art of gentle revolution

Manifesto from Another world is possible:

Each human life is a gift from God

Each person has equal worth and value

We stand in solidarity against any relationships, practices or structures which deny or undermine this belief

The resources of the earth are God's gift to us

for which we are called to take responsibility and show care

We are called to live simply,

identify with the poor

and know that our possessions and wealth are gifts from God

to be shared for the common good.

We are of all genders, ethnicities backgrounds and dis/abilities

We stand together with Christians all over the world

We are called to love one another

and to be a healing community seeking the wholeness and liberation of all peoples...

Communion:

Play Table of Christ

Prayer of thanksgiving

God our Father and Mother thank you that you are a gracious, abundant and generous host. Creator of every thing, thank you that you became the guest of humanity. The heavenly host, the creator, became the guest of the animals in the stable, the villagers of Nazareth, the religious leaders in the temple, the prostitutes, drunkards, tax collectors. You let us play host, became one of us, dined at our table. You ate the same bread, drank the same wine - everybody having a good time. You shared stories, shared our story. When you left the table, you left bread and wine to remember you by.....

*Holy holy holy Lord
God of all peoples
Heaven and earth are full of your welcome
Hosanna in the highest*

Your death on the cross has enabled us to be guests at God's table. Grant that by the power of the Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be for us his body and blood who on the night he was betrayed took bread, gave you thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying 'take eat, this is my body which is given for you'. After supper he took the cup, gave you thanks, and said to them: 'this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me'

*Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again*

Invitation

The table of Jesus is your place of gathering
Here you are welcomed, wanted, loved
Here there is a place set for you

So come all you who thirst,
All you who hunger for the bread of life
All you whose souls cry out for healing

Come all you who are excluded
All you who see walls instead of welcome
All you who see suspicion in the eyes of power

Come all you who are weary
All you who are bowed down with worry
All you who ache with the tiredness of living

Come all you poor
All you who are without food or refuge
All you who go hungry in a land of plenty

Come all you who are lost
All you who search for meaning but cannot find it
All you who have no place of belonging

Jesus invites you
Draw near with faith
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you and his blood which he shed for you
Eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving

Share bread and wine

Blessing:
May God bless us with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that we may live from deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger
At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of
God's creations
So that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger,
and war,
So that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and
To turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with just enough foolishness
To believe that we can make a difference in the world,
So that we can do what others claim cannot be done:
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and all our neighbours who are poor.
Amen.