

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

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Isaiah 25:** v1: *'God, you are my God. I celebrate you. I praise you.'* (The Message) This passage speaks of the feast which God has prepared for His people; and this feast is lavish, to be enjoyed by us here and now. Let this be a day when we celebrate the truth that God has given Himself unreservedly to us - He is **my** God and He is **your** God. Let's open ourselves this week to God and all that He has made available to us. If it's love we need, He gives it in abundance. If it's forgiveness, His arms are open wide to ladle it into our hearts. If it's hope we need, He will lift up our hearts. Let's come to God in our need and receive from Him.
- **Psalm 23:** This Psalm crops up often in the lectionary readings, and every time we read it, we get something fresh out of it. God is our Beloved and wants to shower us with good things. Here it is in 'Psalms for Praying': *'O my Beloved, you are my shepherd; I shall not want. You bring me to green pastures for rest and lead me beside still waters renewing my spirit. You restore my soul. You lead me in the path of goodness to follow Love's way. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow and of death, I am not afraid. For you are ever with me; your rod and your staff they guide me; they give me strength and comfort. You prepare a table before me in the presence of all my fears; you bless me with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell*

*in the heart of the Beloved for ever.'* May this unfamiliar version speak to us where we are this week and may God bring us to rest and refreshment and renewal as we bask in His love.

- **Philippians 4:** Paul urges us not to hold grudges, but to be reconciled with those we have fallen out with. Does this challenge you? v4 The Message: *'Celebrate God all day, every day ... revel in him.'* To focus on God in this way rather than on ourselves will transform our living. In verse 5 Paul encourages us not to worry - worry is the opposite of faith - but to share what worries we have with God and let God give us a sense of peace as we remember we are not alone: God is with us and we are facing life together with Him. An attitude of praise and thanksgiving is what Paul urges us to cultivate. Let's do that this week and let it be a week of celebration as we live in God's presence.
- **Matthew 22:** The parable of the wedding banquet. We are all invited to the feast God has prepared for us here and now. He wants us to rejoice in His presence and all that comes with His presence. He wants us to savour His presence and find Him with us whatever we are doing and whatever we are going through. Apparently, wedding garments were provided for those invited, so perhaps His harsh words to the guest without the wedding garment arise from the fact that the guest has not bothered to change. Paul mentions in Colossians 3: 9-14 the old life we have to let go of, and the 'new wardrobe' of clothes God offers us: compassion, kindness, humility, forgiveness, love. When we respond to Jesus' invitation, He expects us to be transformed and adopt His attitude and ways. How willing are we?