

# *The Universal Invitation*

*Third Sunday in Lent*

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## *Sunday, March 20, 2022*

*Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?*

I don't know how often you have heard these words, but they are a stunning invitation. It is repeated in the Last Chapter of the Last Book of the Bible:

*The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'  
And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'  
And let everyone who is thirsty come.  
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.*

Now they were first spoken to a people who were in Babylon – in Exile. Like modern day refugees, they found themselves in a land that was not overly welcoming and felt abandon by all that they held dear and yet their God speaks, not words of condemnation – but words of promise. In the midst of hopelessness here is the offer of hope. Not just restoration, but of abundance.

As we hear these words, it is so easy for us to see them as addressed to us – For in each of our lives, there is often the feeling of hopelessness. Not that we always verbalise them, but if we look into our hearts, we will find points of despair, that we have hung onto and not let go off.

In Lent, as we review our lives, we have the time to spring clean not only dealing with our unfortunate activities and actions (Sin) but also the emotional baggage that we all carry. This hopelessness, that we allow to crowd out the promises of God, that eats away at our Joy and makes us less than what God intends.

Where does all the anger come from? the fear? the lack of graciousness? The negativity? These things that seem to populate the Christian community. Is it any wonder that no one wants to come?

Why do we not celebrate God's provision, God's Generosity, God's Love?

Perhaps it is my own brand of hopelessness, but I have reached that point of despair, that there is little more I can say, that is different to what I have already said before or is it God pointing me to pointing you in this direction. I cannot tell you the Gospel, I cannot demonstrate the Gospel to you, that I must point you to the experience of the Love of a generous God.

This means to swallow our pride – to stop seeing ourselves as the archetypical Christian and as the authority on all things but to place ourselves into total dependence upon God.

For in as much that God offers, we must receive.

It is time, especially in Lent to forget the corporate and focus on the individual – on you and on me. Our community is made up of individuals and until we ourselves change and deal with the parts of our lives that not only bring ourselves down but our whole community. This begins with the ‘me’. Let us look at ourselves through God’s eyes and ask him to forgive and then to give. These words are so true and worth reflecting on

*Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;  
let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways*

**.AMEN**