



**Sunday 11 October 2026 to
Sunday 18 October 2026**

Pastor Mark is a Kiwi and loves being pastor of St Paul's Lutheran Church in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) on New Zealand's South Island. He is bishop emeritus of the Lutheran Church of New Zealand (LCNZ), has served on the LCA Commission on Worship and represents the LCNZ on the Roman Catholic–Lutheran Dialogue Commission. He is married to Leanne and is dad to Chelsea (and Tim), Brittany and Charlotte. A musician (organist, pianist, singer and composer), Mark also enjoys gardening, making people laugh and following sport, especially cricket and rugby. And when the opportunity arises, he loves eating rollmops on fresh bread with his father-in-law, Kevin.



**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**
OF AUSTRALIA

Kua rite katoa; haere mai (Everything is ready; come)

by Mark Whitfield

Look, I have prepared my dinner ... and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:4b).

Read [Matthew 22:1-14](#)

Our family is preparing for our daughter's wedding early next year. There is something wonderful about getting ready for such a celebration – the invitations, the planning, the food, the service order and all the little details that need to be prepared. Then comes the moment when all the preparations are complete, and the guests are invited: 'Come!'

That is the invitation Jesus places before you today.

It's easy to imagine that before God can welcome you, you need to get your life in order. Perhaps you think you need to become a better Christian, overcome your failures, pray more, believe more strongly or somehow make yourself worthy of God.

But listen again to Jesus: 'Everything is ready; come.'

The invitation begins not with what you have done, but with what God has done for you. God has prepared the feast. In Jesus, he has dealt with your sin, carried your guilt and opened the way for you to live in his grace. You don't have to make yourself worthy before you come. You don't have to arrive with your life neatly sorted out.

You simply come.

In Māori, we hear the invitation: '*Kua rite katoa; haere mai*', which means in English, 'Everything is ready; come.'

Perhaps you need to hear those words personally today. Whatever you are carrying – your regrets, disappointments, doubts, weariness or sense that you have not done enough – Jesus invites you. The invitation is not a demand to become someone different before God will love you. It's an invitation to receive the love and grace God has already prepared for you in Christ.

So, come. Come as you are. Receive his forgiveness. Rest in his grace and rejoice in his love. And having received this gracious invitation yourself, become someone who gladly says to others: 'Everything is ready; come.'

Lord Jesus, thank you that everything is ready, not because I have earned it, but because you have prepared it for me. Help me to receive your grace, trust your promise, and rejoice in your invitation today. Amen.

Monday 12 October 2026

God's covenant, your response

by Mark Whitfield

All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient (Exodus 24:7b).

Read [Exodus 24:3–11](#)

Perhaps you know the feeling. You hear God's word, and something within you says, 'Yes, this is how I want to live.' You resolve to pray more faithfully, be more patient, forgive more readily, serve more generously or trust God more completely.

Your intentions are sincere, but then life happens. You lose your patience. You fail to forgive. You become distracted. You worry instead of trusting. Once again, you discover that good intentions do not always become faithful actions.

That's why something important in today's verse deserves your attention. Before Israel makes its promise, God has already spoken. God has established his covenant. God has taken the initiative. God has made these people his own and given them his word.

'Ko te iwi a te Atua tātou' (in English, 'We are the people of God').

And that is where your confidence begins. You are not God's child because you have managed to get everything right. You are not held within God's covenant because you have made strong enough promises. You belong to God because God is gracious and faithful.

Moses speaks of 'the blood of the covenant' God has made with his people. The covenant rests ultimately not on the strength of Israel's promise, but on God's faithfulness.

That's the good news for you today. In baptism, God claimed you as his own, not because you promised to be perfect, but because God is gracious. Your obedience does not earn his love. Your obedience is your response to the love he has already given you.

So, hear God's word today. Seek to live faithfully. But when you fail – and you will – don't despair. Return to the God who forgives, restores and holds you securely in his covenant grace.

Faithful God, thank you for making me your own. Help me respond to your love with faithful obedience. When I fail, remind me that my confidence rests not in my promises, but in your unfailing faithfulness. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday 13 October 2026

Kei roto i a ia te ora (His life is in him)

by Mark Whitfield

Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him (Acts 20:10b).

Read [Acts 20:7-12](#)

I often think of my father when I read about Eutychus. Dad was a hard-working farmer, and after a long week, sometimes he would nod off during the Sunday sermon. Eutychus, however, did rather more than fall asleep in church! As Paul preached late into the night, Eutychus fell from a window three storeys up and died.

Yet what Paul says afterwards is astonishing: 'Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.' In Māori, it's expressed like this: '*Kaua e maku, kei roto i a ia te ora.*'

Perhaps you need to hear those words today.

Maybe something in your life feels as though it has fallen a long way. A relationship may seem beyond repair. Someone you love may be struggling. A dream may have died. You may simply feel exhausted, discouraged or uncertain about what lies ahead.

In those moments, it is easy to look at what has happened and conclude that the story is over.

But God sees more than you can see.

Notice what Paul does. He goes down to where Eutychus has fallen. He doesn't stand at a distance and call out words of encouragement. He comes alongside him and embraces him. In that simple action, we see something of God's heart. When you are at your lowest, God does not remain at a safe distance. In Jesus, he comes down to you. He meets you in your weakness, your fear and your brokenness, and says, '*Kaua e maku. Do not be afraid.*'

God is the God of life. And even when you cannot see how, God is still at work.

Eutychus was restored, and the people were 'not a little comforted'.

So, take this promise with you today: '*Kei roto i a ia te ora* – his life is in him'. In Christ, your story is never simply defined by the place where you may have fallen.

Lord Jesus, meet me where I am today. When I am afraid or discouraged, remind me that you are the God of life. Help me trust that you are still at work, even when I cannot yet see what you are doing. Amen.

A meal that proclaims

by Mark Whitfield

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Read [1 Corinthians 11:20–32](#)

When you come to the Lord's table, you are not simply receiving bread and wine. You are receiving Christ himself – his forgiveness, his grace and his life. At the same time, you are joining in a proclamation that has echoed through the centuries: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

In Māori, the words are beautifully simple: '*Ko te tinana o te Karaiti mō koutou*', which means in English, 'The body of Christ is for you.'

Those words are deeply personal. Christ gives himself for you, for your forgiveness, your healing, your strength and your hope. Whatever burdens you carry, whatever joys or sorrows fill your heart, Jesus meets you here with his love.

Paul wrote these words to Christians in Corinth who had forgotten that receiving Christ's gifts changes how we live with one another. Some were being overlooked, while others thought only of themselves. Paul reminds us that the Lord's Supper is never just about 'me'; it draws us into Christ's body and opens our eyes to others.

As you receive Christ's self-giving love, you are also invited to reflect that love in your daily life – in kindness offered, forgiveness given, a listening ear, a word of encouragement or care for someone who feels lonely or forgotten.

Each time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. And through your words, actions and love, your life can also proclaim the grace of the One who gave himself for you.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving yourself for me and feeding me with your grace. Shape my life by your love, so that I may share your kindness and welcome with others. Amen.

When Christ knocks

by Mark Whitfield

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me (Revelation 3:20).

Read [Revelation 3:14-22](#)

Are there times when your faith feels a little too familiar?

You know the prayers. You know the songs and hymns. You know the stories of Scripture. You may have followed Jesus for many years. Yet familiarity can sometimes become complacency. The wonder of grace can begin to fade, and you can forget just how much you need Christ each day.

That is why Jesus personally speaks these words to you: 'Be earnest, and repent.'

But hear what lies behind those words. Jesus doesn't speak them because he has given up on you. He says them because he loves you: 'I reprove and discipline those whom I love.'

His purpose is not to condemn you, but to draw you back. Not to push you away, but to awaken you to his presence and renew your faith.

And then comes that beautiful picture: 'I am standing at the door, knocking.'

Jesus is near you. He is speaking to you. He is inviting you to listen: '*Tēnā, whakarongo mai – whakarongo ki tōku reo*', which in English means, 'Please listen – listen to my voice.'

What might Jesus be saying to you today?

Perhaps he is calling you back from spiritual complacency. Perhaps he is reminding you of the wonder of his forgiveness. You may have something that you need to honestly bring before him. Or perhaps he is simply reminding you that you do not have to carry today in your own strength.

Jesus is still knocking.

You don't need to have everything sorted out before you open the door. You don't need to prove yourself worthy. Simply come as you are. Receive his grace again. Let him renew your faith, restore your joy and draw you into deeper fellowship with him.

Jesus doesn't knock because he has given up on you. He knocks because he loves you.

Lord Jesus, help me to hear your voice today. Forgive me when I take your grace for granted. Awaken my faith, renew my joy and draw me closer to you. Amen.

Areruia! E kingi ana te Atua, te Kaha Rawa (The Lord God the Almighty reigns)

by Mark Whitfield

Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns (Revelation 19:6b).

Read [Revelation 19:5-10](#)

There are times when neither the world nor our lives seem to be under God's reign. We see conflict, suffering and injustice, and worry about the future or face circumstances we cannot change. We may watch people we love struggle and wonder where God is. Even within the church, we may become discouraged by what is difficult, declining or beyond our control.

Into those moments comes the great cry of Revelation: 'Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns.'

'Hallelujah' means 'Praise the Lord'. It's not simply an expression of happiness. It's a declaration of faith. You praise God not because everything is going well, but because God is still God. He is still Lord. He is still at work, even when you cannot see what he is doing.

Revelation gives us a wonderful picture of where everything is heading: the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus, the Lamb who gave himself for our salvation, is the bridegroom, and we are part of his beloved people. Our future is not ultimately defeat, abandonment or despair. Our future is with Christ.

That means our hope doesn't depend on how strong we feel today. Our faith doesn't rest on our ability to have everything sorted out. It rests on Jesus' faithfulness.

So, today, simply be faithful where God has placed you. Pray. Worship. Love someone. Forgive. Encourage. Serve. Trust. Even the small and ordinary things you do in faith are seen by God.

You may not see the difference your faithfulness makes. But God does.

So, lift your heart today and join the song of heaven: *Areruia! E kingi ana te Atua, te Kaha Rawa* – Hallelujah! The Lord God Almighty reigns.

Lord Jesus, when I cannot see what you are doing, help me trust that you are still Lord. Keep me faithful, hopeful and courageous, knowing that my future rests not in myself, but in you. Amen.

A new song for a new day

by Mark Whitfield

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord; bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day (Psalm 96:1,2).

Read [Psalm 96:1-9\(10-13\)](#)

As both a pastor and a musician, I have always loved the invitation to 'sing a new song'. Over the years, I have had the joy of composing new music for worship, finding fresh melodies through which the timeless gospel can be placed on the lips and into the hearts of God's people. Yet Psalm 96 reminds us that the 'new song' is about much more than music. It's your renewed response to God's never-ending mercy.

Every day brings something different. Some days are filled with joy and thanksgiving; other days bring uncertainty, disappointment, loneliness or worry. Yet whatever today holds, God's grace is still new. His love for you has not changed. His promises remain sure. And so, each new day gives you a reason to sing again.

In Te Reo Māori, the psalm says: '*Waiata ki a Ihowā he waiata hou*' – 'Sing to the Lord a new song.' You may not feel particularly musical, and perhaps your voice is not one you would want others to hear. But this invitation is not about musical ability. It's about faith.

The new song God places within you may be a song of trust when you cannot see what lies ahead; a song of gratitude for a blessing you have received; a song of hope when life feels difficult; or simply a quiet confidence that Jesus is with you.

And your song is not meant to remain inside you. The psalm continues: 'Tell of his salvation from day to day.' Your life can become a witness to God's grace – in the words you speak, the kindness you offer, the forgiveness you extend and the hope you carry.

So today, whatever circumstances you face, listen for the new song God is placing in your heart. You are loved. You are forgiven. Christ is with you. His mercy is new today.

Lord Jesus, put a new song in my heart today. Give me faith when I am uncertain, gratitude when I am blessed, and hope when I struggle. May my words and my life proclaim your love and salvation. Amen.

Sunday 18 October 2026

What bears God's image?

by Jodie Hoff

Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21b).

Read [Matthew 22:15-22](#)

I want to invite us to begin with a simple but hopeful question from Jesus: Whose image does this carry?

In the passage, people come to Jesus hoping to catch him out. But as Jesus so often does, he turns the moment into something deeper. The coin bears Caesar's image, so give Caesar what is Caesar's. Then he leaves us with the far more important question: What bears God's image?

We do.

You do. I do. Every person we meet today carries something of God's goodness, dignity and possibility.

So, as we begin today, let's hold onto this: before the work, before the decisions, before the pressures and conversations of the day, we are already loved. We are held by God. And we have the beautiful opportunity to reflect God's love in what we say and do.

May that steady us, encourage us and help us bring grace, wisdom and kindness into this day.

Loving God, thank you that your image is carried in each of us. Help us to see your goodness in one another and bring hope, grace and courage into all we do today. Amen.

With more than 25 years of leadership experience in Lutheran schools, Jodie Hoff brings a deep commitment to Lutheran education and the people and communities it serves. Having lived and worked in both Queensland and South Australia, she now serves as the executive director of Lutheran Education Australia. Jodie is passionate about building relationships, fostering connection and creating opportunities for people and communities to flourish. Beyond her work, she enjoys photography and the arts.

Sermon
20th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 23)
Light Lutheran Church
October 11th, 2026

Matthew 22:1-14 - “Do I have those ‘righteous’ Robes?”

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be blessed in Christ Jesus, Amen. Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to begin with a question: **Who’s got God’s wedding robes?**

Not, “Who’s got their best clothes on?” Not, “Who looks like they belong here?” But **who’s wearing the garment the King has provided?** Because that’s really what Jesus asks us in this strange parable about a wedding feast.

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven looks like a king who prepares a wedding feast for his son. The food is ready. The tables are set. Everything is prepared. So, the king sends his servants out with a simple message: **“Come to the wedding feast!”**

What an invitation! You don’t have to organise the food. You don’t have to pay for the meal. You don’t have to prove that you deserve a seat. The King has done it all. Just come. But some people refuse. They simply don’t want to come. Others get on with their own business. One goes to his farm. Another goes to his business and that sounds remarkably familiar, doesn’t it? We live in a culture where people have plenty to do. Work. Sport. Family. Gardens. Holidays. Renovations. Fishing. Footy. The list goes on and none of those things are necessarily bad.

But we can fill our lives with good things and still have no room for God. That’s the uncomfortable part of Jesus’ parable. **The invitation goes out, but not everyone wants it.** And that invitation still goes out today.

“Come to Jesus.” “Come and receive forgiveness.” “Come and hear God’s Word.” “Come to the feast.” “Come and receive Christ.” But plenty of people simply aren’t interested and we shouldn’t kid ourselves: sometimes we aren’t very interested either. We can become comfortable with church. Comfortable with

our pew or seat. Comfortable with our congregation. Comfortable with our own building.

We can enjoy having our little corner of the kingdom sorted out, but Jesus reminds us that the King's invitation reaches much further than our comfortable little corner. The King wants his wedding hall full.

So, he says to his servants: **“Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”** Anyone. The poor. The needy. The outsider. The person who doesn't have their life together. The person who doesn't know the hymns. The person who hasn't darkened the door of a church for twenty years. The person who thinks Christianity has nothing to do with them.

Go and invite them.

But here's the important thing: Jesus doesn't tell us to invite people because our church needs bigger numbers. He doesn't tell us to invite people because we need to keep an organisation alive and he certainly doesn't tell us to invite people so that we can prove ourselves to God. **We invite because God has already invited us.** That's what changes everything.

But then Jesus takes the parable in a confronting direction. The servants bring in everyone they can find. The wedding hall fills up. But then the king notices someone who isn't wearing a wedding garment and the king asks:

“Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” The man has nothing to say. No explanation. So, the king has him thrown out.

That sounds harsh don't you think? But Jesus gives us an important picture here. Jesus doesn't tell us exactly how this man came to the feast without a wedding garment. But that's precisely the point of the picture. He has entered the banquet without receiving what the King provides. He wants the feast, but he refuses the garment. He wants the kingdom on his own terms. He's a wedding crasher. He's in for the free food and drink. He wants the banquet without receiving what the King gives and that brings us right to the heart of the Gospel.

So, here is a warning for us. We don't come before God dressed in our own goodness. We don't come wearing our church record, our family history, our morality or our religious achievements. We come wearing Christ.

God gives us the wedding garment. In baptism, he clothes us with Christ. Through faith, we receive Christ's righteousness as our own. Jesus takes our sin in the great exchange and gives us his rightness.

So, the question isn't, 'Have I made myself good enough for God's banquet?' The answer to that is always no. The question is, 'Am I trusting Christ?' Because Christ is our wedding garment.

God invites us to his feast, and God also provides what we need to enter it.

He doesn't look at us and say: "Get yourself cleaned up and then come." He doesn't say: "Make yourself worthy and then I'll accept you." He says: **"Come."** And then he clothes us. Not with our goodness. Not with our achievements. Not with our church attendance. Not with our reputation. Not with the fact that we have been Lutheran for fifty, sixty or seventy years. He clothes us with **Christ**.

Paul says in Galatians: **"All of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."**

There's our wedding garment. **Christ himself**. Jesus takes our sin and gives us his righteousness. He takes our shame and gives us his holiness. He takes our death and gives us his life. He takes everything that separates us from God and carries it to the cross and in the great exchange, he gives us everything that belongs to him. That's grace. That's the Gospel.

We don't come to God dressed in our own righteousness. We come wearing Christ and that means the person sitting beside you today doesn't need to prove themselves either. Neither do you. The farmer. The retiree. The professional. The battler. The newcomer. The person whose life looks completely sorted. The person whose life has fallen apart. **Christ is enough for all of us.** That's why there is room at the table.

And now we can understand the last part of the parable differently. The King sends his servants out to gather people in. That means **we are also those servants**. But notice what we carry. We don't carry a list of demands. We don't carry a clipboard checking whether people are good enough. We don't stand at the door saying: "Clean yourself up first." We carry the King's invitation. **"Come."** Come and hear the good news. Come and receive forgiveness. Come and meet

Jesus. Come and hear God's Word. Come and receive his gifts. Come to the feast and that matters for us as a collection of preaching points.

Freeling doesn't exist just for Freeling. Kapunda doesn't exist just for Kapunda. Allen's Creek, Bethel and Rosedale don't exist just for the people already sitting in those churches either.

God has placed us here as his servants. We have been blessed. We have buildings. We have people. We have history. We have resources. We have the Gospel. **We have Christ**, and we have people all around us who need what we have received. Some of them know they need it. Many don't.

Some are lonely. Some are struggling financially. Some have families falling apart. Some carry guilt they never talk about. Some simply assume Christianity has nothing to offer them, and some are perfectly comfortable and don't think they need God at all.

Our job isn't to force them through the door. Our job isn't to carry the guilt of whether they respond. **Our job is simply to invite.** The Holy Spirit does the rest. That takes the pressure off. We don't save people. Jesus does. We don't manufacture faith. The Holy Spirit creates faith through the Word. We don't provide the wedding garment. **The King does.** We simply take the invitation into the streets and sometimes that invitation might look very ordinary.

A conversation over the fence. A cup of coffee. An invitation to a barbecue. A visit to someone who hasn't been around for a while. Offering to pray with someone. Inviting a neighbour to church. Sitting beside someone who feels alone. Forgiving someone who has hurt us. Showing practical love when somebody needs a hand. These things don't earn God's favour. **They flow from the favour we have already received.**

So, who's got the wedding robe?

If you're trusting in yourself, you haven't got one. If you're trusting in how good you've been, you haven't got one. If you're trusting in your church membership, your family last name or history, or your religious achievements, you haven't got one. But if you trust in Jesus Christ, **you're wearing Christ.** And that is enough.

The King has invited you. The King has provided the garment. The King has prepared the feast. The King has forgiven your sin, and the King now sends you out with the same invitation: **“Come to the feast.”**

So, let's enjoy the feast. Let's live together in the forgiveness Christ has given us and then, as forgiven people wearing Christ, let's open the doors and invite others in. Not because we have to make the kingdom bigger, but because **the King wants his house full**. Not because we have something to prove, but because **we have something wonderful to share**. Christ has clothed us, forgiven us and has welcomed us.

Now let's go and invite others to the feast.

We Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for inviting us to the wedding feast of your Son. Thank you that Christ has taken our sin and clothed us with his righteousness. Keep us trusting in him, living in his forgiveness, and ready to share your gracious invitation with others.

In Jesus' name. Amen.