



The Church of England
in Essex and East London

Diocese of Chelmsford

Sermon Notes

Trinity 18

Exodus 32; 1-14; Psalm 106: 1-6 & 19-23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew
22:1-14

Sunday 15th October 2017

The story of the making of the golden calf in **Exodus 32: 1-14** is well known. The introduction in v1 highlights two aspects of the people of Israel's thinking: i) their understanding that it was Moses (rather than God) who brought them out of Egypt, and ii) their impatience. The latter seems well worth exploring in a society which often struggles with delayed gratification. The Lord's 'relenting' (v14) and Moses' role in this also opens up the theme of intercession in an Old Testament context. God's reference to Israel as 'your people' (v7) as he addresses Moses is striking. We then see Moses' complete loyalty to the people he leads, in the face of God's suggestion that they might be destroyed (v10) Moses' intercession draws on the history of God's relationship with his people, and the promises made to the patriarchs, as well as referencing the need for God's name to be vindicated in the sight of the Egyptians.

The later verses of **Psalms 106: 1-6; 19-23** narrate the golden calf incident again, highlighting the role of Moses who 'stood in the breach' and the Israelites' forgetfulness of God, whilst the theme of remembering emerges from the opening verses.

We see a hint of the struggles of the new Israel in **Philippians 4:1-9** as Paul urges them to stand firm and to be united, free from anxiety and full of joy as they focus on what is of true value – a nice contrast to the golden calf described in Exodus 32.

The context of **Matthew 22: 1-14** remains significant as we complete the series of parables. Jesus is teaching in the Temple, addressing the 'chief priests and elders of the people' (21:23) who are challenging his authority. The description of the feast as a wedding banquet is resonant of the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19, which in turn has roots in Old Testament imagery – Isaiah 54:5 and Hosea 2. Of particular note in the passage are:

- The multiplicity of invitations – verses 3, 4 and 8
- The response of those first invited – they 'made light of it' (v5) and others mistreat and kill the servant messengers. This seems the basis for their unworthiness (v8)
- The presence of both 'bad and good' (v10) among the eventual guests.

It has been suggested that the host would issue wedding garments to the guests but this is not supported by the text itself. Nakedness and shame are often linked in Scripture, and Revelation 19: 8 refers to fine linen as the 'righteous deeds of the saints'. We are told that the man was speechless - maybe his exclusion is because he doesn't speak to acknowledge Jesus before others (Matthew 10:32)?