

### **Divine Hospitality!**

*Jeremiah 33<sup>14-16</sup>; Psalm 25<sup>1-9</sup>; 1 Thessalonians 3<sup>9-end</sup>; Luke 21<sup>25-36</sup>*

*Be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength... to stand before the Son of Man.  
[Luke 21<sup>36</sup>]*

It is so appropriate that we find out about the next chapter of the life of this Church on this first Sunday of the Church's year. I am aware that I, as rector, stand on the shoulders of giants who have held this role in the past. But I am also aware that the future will judge what we do at this point in time: will we have done what we need to so that the life and mission of the Church is sustained into the future?

That sums up so very succinctly the message for Advent Sunday. The past isn't as important as the future: it isn't what has been said about us, but what will be said about us that matters. That aligns with the Advent themes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus, of death, of hell and of judgement.

But as a good Scot I am also very aware of the powerful potential of the New Year. It certainly isn't in terms of resolutions, but of reflecting on the past to change the future. Our responsibility is to ensure that the changes we are responsible for are for the good.

Luke is the Gospel for this year, and the Gospel set for most of the principal services during this year. This is the most joyful of the 4 Gospels. We shall get to know it very well over the next 12 months.

Just an initial thought.

There is no record of Jesus owning a home and, even if he did, he was away from it a great deal. Yet, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is the guest in many homes, but somehow, the guest becomes the host.

- ✠ That is something powerful and a summary of what the Gospel is about, leading to the breaking of bread on the road to Emmaus where the unknown companion is invited to share hospitality and then becomes the focus of the Eucharist they share and where Jesus becomes known in the breaking of the bread.

- ✠ It continues when Jesus appears as they gather behind closed doors after the death and the rumour of his resurrection and immediately he becomes the most significant person in that gathering. Where Jesus ate broiled fish in the presence of the Disciples to prove he wasn't a ghost immediately before the ascension.

- ✠ It is in this Gospel that Jesus goes to the Temple twice but to 7 dinner parties (a good balance if you ask me). At dinner, wherever he was, the Jewish authorities recognised him as being in charge: he eats with sinners. That's why we can come here - whoever we are, whatever we have done, at this table there is a place for you. None of us deserve it but all of us are offered that place - all that God in Christ demands of us is honesty about ourselves and a humility about our need of forgiveness.

- ✠ It is in this Gospel, when Jesus institutes the Eucharist where he focuses on that fact that this table extends into eternity - I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

We cannot invite Jesus as a guest in our lives unless you recognise that this guest becomes the host.

It isn't then our home, it is his home.

It isn't then our table, but his table.

It isn't then our family, but his family.

It isn't then our life, but his life lived in us.

It isn't then our Church, it is HIS Church - we pray that who we are and all that we do honours our host.