

SUNDAY WORSHIP AT HOME 2ND AUGUST 2020

(prepared by Rev Trish Davis)

Call to Worship (from Psalm 145):

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

² Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

Hymn: Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah 465 STF (By William Williams).

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore; feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield, be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee; I will ever give to thee.

Prayer:

Holy God,
we thank you for your constant love and we rejoice that you are our strong deliverer, our strength and our shield. We praise you for coming into our world in Jesus; for giving us a glimpse of your glory, and for showing us

what you were prepared to do to draw each one of us to yourself. We know that we do not deserve your sacrifice for us, and as we consider the cross, the place of both suffering and healing, we come before you to confess our sins.

We have been angry and impatient, complaining about the faults of others, and failing to see our own. We have been lazy and selfish, neglecting the interests of others and pursuing our own. We have been faithless and unworthy, ignoring the strength you offer and relying upon our own.
(Pause to reflect on your personal failings and to consider changes that you will commit to this coming week...)

God of mercy,
you have promised to forgive those who truly repent. Help us to accept your forgiveness, and dwell in us by your Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed those who were ill. ¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so that they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.' ¹⁶ Jesus replied, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' ¹⁷ 'We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,' they answered.

¹⁸ 'Bring them here to me,' he said. ¹⁹ And he told the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces

that were left over. ²¹The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Reflection:

We can't imagine what it might be like to be a part of a big crowd anymore...can we?! Many of us feel very uncomfortable at the thought of crowds right now. Can you even remember the last time you were part of a large crowd? Why were you there? What did it feel like?

So, this well known Bible passage about Jesus feeding the 5000 might be harder than usual for us to relate to.

Maybe we will dwell more on the thought of Jesus withdrawing privately to a solitary place. Many of you have been on your own a lot more than normal over the past 4 + months and you might be fed up with being in a solitary place. For Jesus it was a chance to recover himself following the very sad news that his cousin, John the Baptist, was dead.

Perhaps you have had to come to terms with the death of a family member, or a friend, during lock down, and the opportunities to meet with others to share grief have been limited. Interestingly Jesus was not alone for very long – people sought him out, and he was able to find enough love and compassion for them to want to help them – he healed all those who were ill, and then he gave them food to eat, much to the shock of his disciples who felt there was nowhere near enough food to go round.

I wonder if the part of the account that struck you the most today was: 'he gave thanks and broke the loaves'. A reminder of our Communion services – do you remember them!? We have something very special, as Christians, when we meet together to share the bread and the wine, and for many, being unable to do that for so long will be a real sadness. We can be assured that, although we may experience a particular closeness to our

Lord through sharing bread and wine together, Jesus is still as close to us as ever in our own homes and anywhere else we might find ourselves.

What would Jesus' disciples have been thinking as the miracle took place that day? Would they have thought back to the times God fed his people in the wilderness with manna and quail after the escape from Egypt with Moses? Would they have Herod's birthday banquet in mind – which led to the death of John the Baptist and from which they had collected John's body? - A meal that served to display Herod's power, so unlike the meal Jesus was offering, which showed his love and compassion for the crowd who had followed him. Would they be amazed at the role they were playing in this miracle – taking the bread and fish from Jesus and handing it round – seeing it grow and spread, satisfying such a huge number of people? They might have felt utterly incapable of doing what Jesus asked of them, but did it the best they could anyway, so Jesus was able to work a miracle through their efforts.

What hope that brings to each one of us! If we ever feel powerless to do what Jesus asks of us, here is a reminder of how Jesus can work through faithful disciples.

Let's use the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' to fuel our faith. We might feel despondent, useless, frustrated, unhappy because of some of the changes in our lives over this Covid-19 time. (Or you may have experienced hope and joy in many unexpected ways! Don't feel you should have found this time purely a struggle...) Whatever you have felt, and still feel, look to Jesus – consider how he cares, how he teaches, how he leads by example, how he manages his own sadness and how he inspires his disciples. Rejoice that you belong to him. Look for the unexpected joys around you; consider who you might show compassion to...

If you wonder how you can show compassion or inspire others ask yourself: Can I pray for someone I don't usually pray for, or encourage

them in some way (through a phone call, or a letter, or an email, or a text)? Can I bake a cake or some biscuits for someone, or give them flowers, or a picture I have drawn or coloured? Can I write a poem or take a photo which might bring joy to someone else? If my circumstances are more limited just now, and I rely on others to care for me, can I brighten their day or show my appreciation through a warm smile or a kind word?

Know that the smallest of beginnings, like the few loaves and fishes broken by Jesus and shared out by his disciples, can grow into something so much more, and determine to be part of that in whatever way you can. Amen.

Hymn: Christ our King before creation STF 318 (By Ivor. H. Jones)
(You can sing this to any tune you use for the hymn 'Love Divine')

Christ our King before creation, life before all life began,
crowned in deep humiliation by your partners in God's plan,
make us humble in believing, and believing, bold to pray:
'Lord, forgive our self-deceiving, come and reign in us today!'

Lord of time and Lord of history, giving, when the world despairs,
faith to wrestle with the mystery of a God who loves and cares,
make us humble in believing, and, believing, bold to pray:
'Lord, by grace beyond conceiving, come and reign in us today!'

Word that ends our long debating, life of God which sets us free,
through your body recreating life as life is meant to be,
make us humble in believing, and, believing, bold to pray:
'Lord, in us your aim achieving, come and reign in us today!'

Prayers:

Gracious and holy God,
we come to you with our prayers for others, confident that you hear us.
We pray for our world – for the ability to contain and defeat the coronavirus; we ask for protection for the most vulnerable, thinking especially of nations with limited resources and people living very close together. May the efforts of scientists working towards vaccines be fruitful and the vaccines be made available worldwide as quickly as possible.

We pray about the economic difficulties faced by many people; for businesses ruined or threatened with ruin; for job opportunities lost, and for the fear this brings. We ask that governments will make wise decisions to encourage economic growth, especially in areas that will offer hope for our planet.

We pray for school children who have missed out on education since March and may have been living in dysfunctional families; for the teaching staff trying to work out how they can best run schools safely next term. We ask that the school holiday time through August will bring refreshment to children, staff and parents.

We pray for all those who are ill – physically or mentally – that they will have good care and suitable support. We pray for medical and care staff, counsellors and social workers, that they will make the best decisions even when they are tired and under pressure.

We pray for all who are grieving. We know that you understand their pain and have equipped us to show comfort to those who mourn, through the comfort we ourselves have received.

We pray for our churches as we seek to work out how and when we can open for worship services; and for opportunities to let others know about

your love even when we are not able to meet together. We offer ourselves to you afresh; hopeful that we can continue learning to serve as your disciples did; strengthened by your power and guided by your Spirit. Amen.

(Pause for a moment to add any of your own prayers, silently or out loud...)

The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn: Lead us heavenly Father lead us 238 STF (by James Edmeston)

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee,
yet possessing every blessing if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know,
thou didst tread this earth before us, thou didst feel its keenest woe;
tempted, taunted, yet undaunted, through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

Blessing:

May we move into this week filled with your joy, your forgiveness and the peace that knows no understanding, guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

And the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more.

Amen.