



**Sunday Worship in the Clarendon
Churches
2nd August 2020
8th Sunday after Trinity**

Greeting

Welcome in the name of Christ.
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you

Call to worship

O Lord, open our lips
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;

**as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Praise the Lord.

The Lord's name be praised.

The Collect

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern
both our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection,
both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Talk: Revd. Beth

The feeding of the 5000. Such a familiar story: A miracle, an act of generosity, a display of compassion. Have you ever stopped to think how much eating and drinking we read about in the Bible? There is a fair amount of feasting, but there are many occasions when it is the hungry who are being fed. In the Old Testament we hear about Joseph feeding his estranged brothers when they arrive in Egypt from famine-stricken Canaan. When their descendants are wandering through the wilderness in search of the Promised Land, God feeds them with manna and with quails. Later in the Old Testament there are a couple of stories associated with Elijah: one where he is fed by ravens, and another where he is lodging with the widow of Zarephath during a drought, and convinces her to trust God to provide just enough oil and flour each day to bake bread. In the New Testament, after the resurrection, we find Jesus directing the disciples to shoals of fish in time for breakfast on the beach. But perhaps the most famous story of feeding the hungry is the feeding of the 5000.

Just five small loaves and two fish somehow fed a crowd and supplied leftovers. It's a good follow-on from the parable of the mustard seed, which was one of the five short parables we heard last week. A little grows and goes a long way. I say it's a good follow-on, but actually, we have skipped over a few verses in between. We have missed the gruesome story of the head of John the Baptist being presented on a platter at the request of the daughter of Herodius. How telling that a feast of plenty in Herod's court should serve up power on a platter, whilst Jesus' picnic on a hillside should reveal compassion and generosity on a platter. John the Baptist had been challenging Herod's moral choices, which Herod had justified by his power.

Compassion and generosity are not about wielding power. They are about meeting human need where we see it. A small deed can go a long way. That one item you place at the Foodbank collection point on your way out of the supermarket may be the one item between somebody eating and starving, between life and death. We're told that Jesus already had compassion for the crowd, healing their ailments, before noticing their hunger.

Whilst showing compassion and generosity to the people, Jesus was no doubt stirred by the news of John the Baptist's death, angry perhaps. Could his compassion from on high prove to be a stronger power than that of Herod? Could he release the people from Herod's power?

Can our compassion and generosity release others from the power of poverty, slavery or exploitation? Our sense of justice needs to back up our compassion and generosity. If we donate to the Foodbank but then buy cheap clothing made in a sweatshop, there is little breakthrough of heavenly power. If we buy ethically sourced clothing but then buy coffee which has been grown at a plantation created by destroying a rain forest, there is little breakthrough.

We could argue, that, individually, we can't solve all of the world's injustices, but if we want to show genuine compassion and generosity we need to, at least, think carefully before making decisions, and do some research if we can. My challenge for you today is twofold: consider donating at least one item to the Foodbank this week; and do some research into the origins of that product and the conditions of the workers creating it. Alternatively do the same for an item you already have in your cupboards. Through our thoughtful compassion and generosity, may we see God's heavenly power work a new miracle in our world, providing a real breakthrough in the lives of the hungry and vulnerable.

Picture by Mia and Isla



Prayers

Let us pray to the Lord, the generous giver of all our needs, for the Church and for the world.

We ask that the Church throughout the world will have grace to feed all who are hungry, that your Son's works of compassion and love will be continued in the works that we do with the help of the Holy Spirit which he left for us. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask that you will come to the aid and comfort all those who are suffering at this time of global pandemic, for those who are anxious and fearful, for the lonely and isolated and those who find themselves in the wilderness of despair and poverty. Give to all those in authority and government hearts of compassion not to turn away those who need their care at this time. We pray especially for those who now find themselves in a second lockdown or in quarantine. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask that with the guidance of your Holy Spirit we find new ways of showing hospitality to meet the bodily and emotional needs of those in our lives. During this period of isolation and social distancing we pray that we can continue to give support to those who most need it. We ask you also to bless and protect all those helpers, workers and deliverers throughout our communities who are feeding the hungry and bringing food to those who cannot yet venture out or prepare it themselves. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask you dear Lord, to have mercy and compassion on the hungry, the victims of famine, war and ruthless regimes who always have too little food for their needs whose difficulties have been worsened by the this pandemic; we pray for the continuation of the ability of agencies who work for their relief.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are now at rest. We remember those close to us who are no longer with us, whose earthly struggle is now at an end and who are now in your loving compassionate arms. We give thanks that they rejoice together with all those faithfully departed we see no more.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing prayer

Creator God,

you give seed for us to sow, and bread for us to eat;

make us thankful for what we have received

and generous in supplying the needs of others

so all the world may give you thanks and glory,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,

the power of the Lord Jesus

strengthen you in his service,

the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;

and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.