

# LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



## *The Church's prayer for Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June*

### **Tend**

Jesus our companion,  
you healed the sick,  
And touched the untouchables  
With the warmth of your welcoming love.  
Open our eyes, and warm our hearts  
That we may care for all who need you most.

## **Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June**

### **A New Testament reading from Ephesians 4:25- 5:2**

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

### **Walk in Love**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### **A Gospel reading from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 14:13-21**

#### **Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand**

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup> When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. <sup>15</sup> Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him

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and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup> But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup> They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." <sup>18</sup> And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup> Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. <sup>21</sup> And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

## **A reflection from Revd David Newton, lead minister in Caldecote, Comberton and Toft**

### **Mark 3 – To respond to human need by loving service**

For many of us, small joys around eating have taken on more importance over the last year. During the first lockdown, Sally and I took to buying cream and dairy milk every week. Little extra treats to enjoy in harder times! At some point we also started having more take-outs – primarily from the glorious CamSpice in Great Eversden! These were ways to create tiny little highs in what has become –for many of us – a flatter kind of existence without the usual lifts from the arts, parties, gatherings and so on.

For me, one of the significant relational and cultural losses of the last year has been eating with others. Having dinner with friends the other night was genuinely quite an emotional experience. We had a feast and stayed up talking round the dinner table until 11.30 at night (way past my bedtime!).

Food has, from time immemorial, been about more than simply eating and getting calories in. It is central to rituals and gatherings, central to parties and to forming friendships, and to connecting across cultures. So, it should come as no surprise to us that one of the central images of the Kingdom of God is the image of the banquet.

In Matthew's Gospel there are a number of parables centred on a wedding feast. Our reading today is a story of a particular kind of banquet, involving 15,000 plus people (perhaps akin to images you may have seen of Eid in Leicester or Bradford as the Muslim community feeds thousands in a big street banquet).

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In John's Gospel, the same story is taken as an image about Jesus as the Bread of Life; it is a story to enlighten our understanding of Holy Communion – another kind of feast.

In all the Gospel narratives bread and fish are given to serve the multitude and with huge abundance – with 12 baskets of leftovers.

Yet this banquet is also about need. The people are hungry, there is no where for them to get food, and so the disciples are called by Christ to give the people something to eat.

The same commission is given to us – to feed the hungry, to give "food" (whatever that might mean) to those in need.

So in this image of banqueting, abundance, feasting, and overflowing joy come together with something we usually think of far more austere, helping those in need. And this, I think is important for us to have in our minds as we consider the third mark of mission:

'To respond to human need in loving service'. Or, to 'Tend'.

When I was a student I spent a couple of weeks in Zambia, visiting projects run by the locally lead 'Jubilee Centre' that my church in Cambridge supported. It was quite an extraordinary trip. We were a bit like the circus coming to town, but thankfully because everything we saw was run by locals, there was never a sense of the mzungus (white people) coming to save the day and patronise. We just brought a party. And that party was our offering, our loving service in that moment.

I remember distinctly going to one project run by a local church that included a feeding programme for undernourished children. I remember meeting one young girl who was about 12. She had sickle cell and was not well. To my shame, her name now escapes me.

As we drove off in our minibus I distinctly remember having an image pop into my head of the banquet of the Kingdom of God. And there she was in pride of place, and there I was waiting on tables, overjoyed to be able to serve. It was an image of service and joy coming together. It was an image of a great reversal of our lots in life, but without bitterness, only blessing.

There is much that I think is right about such a vision of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet, I missed something hugely significant, that I have come to learn in years since. We all

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have a desire to serve, to be needed. In some ways, my image of the kingdom was no reversal at all. In this rural part of Zambia, I was providing food to this girl, and in my image of the Heavenly Banquet I was doing just the same!

There is pride and joy to be found in giving, not just receiving. Which means we need to be humble enough to be served and not just serve, to be given to and not just to give. It means accepting our own need, and our own dependence on others to fulfil that need. And if we do that, we may well find that we are responding to the need of someone else – the need to be needed, the need to serve and respond in love to others.

A life of love, that Ephesians calls us to, is never just one direction. It is relational, circular.

Which is why I am so drawn to the picture of a feast. Not a banquet where some serve and others dine in pomp, but a raucous feast where all muck in and feast and serve. This is the image of the feeding of the 15000+. 12 men couldn't do all the work! Here is a story of responding to need yes, but also of joy, abundance and feasting. This is the kind of circle of love we long for.

Perhaps this is why churches have always been so drawn to that strange thing called 'bring and share' lunches. It is, in a quaint and funny sort of way, a wonderful picture of the kingdom, where we all offer our gifts in service to one another.

May we respond to human need where we see it. May we have courage to step out and offer a hand; a listening hear. May we give generously of our time and money and do so cheerfully. But may we also learn to be responded to. For here lies the Kingdom of Love, the Heavenly Banquet.

Amen.