

Service on 20 June 2021

Led by Michaela McNeill, Authorised Lay Minister based in Hardwick

Greeting

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The Lord be with you

All: and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

All: We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Opening Prayer

Lord, direct our thoughts, and teach us to pray.

**Lift up our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen.

Hymn

1. O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be thou for ever near me,
my Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the
pathway
if thou wilt be my guide.

2 O let me hear thee speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
thou guardian of my soul.

3 O Jesus, thou hast promised
to all who follow thee,
that where thou art in glory
there shall thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end:
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my Friend.

4 O let me see thy foot-
marks,
and in them plant mine own;
my hope to follow duly
is in thy strength alone:
O guide me, call me, draw
me,
uphold me to the end;
and then in heaven receive
me,
my Saviour and my Friend.

Meditation

Take up a comfortable posture. Close your eyes. And first, we begin to centre ourselves. Focus on your breathing. Notice your breathing in... and breathing out. Do not try and control it, but just focus on this breathing. In and out. If you get distracted, do not worry. But just bring your attention back. Notice your breathing in and out. In and out. We will now concentrate on these following words from Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Confession

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

For failing you by what we do
and think and say;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
All: save us and help us.

Praise

Blessed is the Lord

All: for he has heard the voice of our prayer;

therefore shall our hearts dance for joy

All: and in our song we will praise our God.

Readings by David MacKenzie

Ephesians 4.25-5.2

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

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.

Homily

By the Rev'd David Newton

Mark of Mission 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).

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 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 ear. 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.

Affirmation of Faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All: We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All: We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All: We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All: This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

*If using the service at home on your own then take some time to
prayer for the needs of the community and the world.*

Merciful Father,

All: accept these prayers

**for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Collect for the Five Marks of Mission – 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. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**All: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen**

Hymn

I Come down, O love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

3 Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Closing

Let us bless the Lord:

All: thanks be to God.

Blessing, honour and glory be yours,
here and everywhere,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: In the name of Christ. Amen.