

**Sunday 1st August –
Ninth Sunday After Trinity**
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



Opening Words

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

○ God, make speed to save us.
○ 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.

cf Psalm 51.15; 70.1

Gathering Prayer

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Hymn – Take This Moment

1 Take this moment, sign and
space;
Take my friends around;
Here among us make the place
Where your love is found.

2 Take the time to call my name,
Take the time to mend
Who I am and what I've been,
All I've failed to tend.

3 Take the tiredness of my days,
Take my past regret,
Letting your forgiveness touch
All I can't forget.

4 Take the little child in me
Scared of growing old;
Help me here to find my worth
Made in God's own mould.

5 Take my talents, take my skills,
Take what's yet to be;
Let my life be yours, and yet
Let it still be me.

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)

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Psalm 78

- ²³ Yet he commanded the skies above,
and opened the doors of heaven;
²⁴ **he rained down on them manna to eat,
and gave them the grain of heaven.**
²⁵ Mortals ate of the bread of angels;
he sent them food in abundance.
²⁶ **He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens,
and by his power he led out the south wind;**
²⁷ he rained flesh upon them like dust,
winged birds like the sand of the seas;
²⁸ **he let them fall within their camp,
all around their dwellings.**
²⁹ And they ate and were well filled,
for he gave them what they craved.

Confession

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden,
to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

Almighty God,

long-suffering and of great goodness:

I confess to you,

I confess with my whole heart

my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments,

my wrong doing, thinking, and speaking;

the hurts I have done to others,

and the good I have left undone.

O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you;

and raise me to newness of life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord enrich us with his grace,

and nourish us with his blessing;

the Lord defend us in trouble and keep us from all evil;

the Lord accept our prayers,

and absolve us from our offences,

for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

Readings by Rick Nelms

Exodus 16.2-4; 9-15

² The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.’

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, “Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.”’

¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they

looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and said, ¹² ‘I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, “At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.”’

¹³ In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.’

John 6:24-35

²⁴ So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ ²⁶ Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.’ ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.’ ²⁸ Then they said to him, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ ²⁹ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ ³⁰ So they said to him, ‘What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?’ ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”’ ³² Then Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ ³⁴ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

³⁵ Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’

Reflection by Rev Priscilla Slusar, Rural Dean

How much do we, as Christians, need to know and understand the Old Testament in order to make sense of the New? There are times when the Old Testament gives us a deeper insight into the life of Jesus and the texts of the New Testament. Today is one of those occasions. In today's reading from St John's Gospel when Jesus talks about the bread that comes down from heaven, he is referring to that very well-known story of the people of Israel in the wilderness. Let's think about this so we can hear what Jesus is saying in the way that the original crowd heard him. Their understanding of God's relationship with his chosen people was at the core of their spirituality, of their very being. In the book of Exodus we hear the story of the people of Israel as they leave the slavery of Egypt and search for the Promised Land. Imagine the scene It's about a month since they left Egypt and set off into the wilderness. They started off rejoicing; full of hope and promise – God's promise – that they would leave slavery behind for ever and enter into the Promised Land. They've pinned their hopes on Moses, together with his brother Aaron. God's chosen ones: these men will lead them.

But there's a problem - they've run out of food!

They left Egypt with only the unleavened dough of the Passover bread. But right now, they're hungry. And not just ordinary hungry, like skipping breakfast. They are so hungry that they pretty quickly lose sight of the Promised Land – their salvation. They even lose sight of God.

Not surprisingly, they're bad-tempered and they begin to blame Moses. They start to say that they'd rather be back in Egypt. They say they'd rather have died there among the 'fleshpots' with full bellies, than die of hunger in the wilderness.

Moses is quick to point out that their complaining is not really aimed at him and Aaron, but against God. But God hears their complaining, and, of course, he has a plan! He provides meat at twilight and bread, manna, every morning. As the dew lifts, the whole surface of the wilderness is covered in it. Moses reminds the people that it is God who has given them bread to eat.

But there's a catch! They must only gather what they need for that day. God is showing the people that he will provide for their needs each day. He's also testing their obedience: anything they try to keep for tomorrow will become unfit to eat. It is still 'bread for today', not bread that will last.

So... this provides the background to today's Gospel reading.

Jesus is in Capernaum, near to the time of the Passover, the celebration of the Jews fleeing from slavery in Egypt. The crowd that comes looking for Jesus in Capernaum are the very same people who've just taken part in the miracle picnic on the grassy hillside, on the other side of the lake, that we heard about last Sunday.

Are they looking for evidence of another miracle, another 'sign'? Are they hoping for more food – many of them would have been poor people who found it difficult to feed themselves and their families. Are they following him in the hopes of witnessing healing miracles? Are they curious about him, trying to find out who he is, why he is so special? They've already declared him Prophet, and wanted to make him King. But now they're calling him Rabbi, Teacher. They know, of course, that something quite extraordinary has happened and they suspect that there's more to come!

Jesus' first response may seem a little odd.

"Do not look for the food that perishes..." he says, "but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. It is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

There are clues in John's Gospel about God's seal on Jesus that we, the readers, can spot. For example, at his baptism John the Baptist testifies that he has seen the Spirit descend from heaven and remain on Jesus.

But the crowd who have followed Jesus do not seem to understand and are still not satisfied. They want to know what they must do to perform the works of God and they want to know what work Jesus is performing? They are still not quite ready to believe that Jesus is the work of God. They are still looking for signs; they need convincing.

'What about the manna that our ancestors ate in the wilderness?', they ask. They're still thinking about food, you see! It seems that they, like their ancestors, may still have their sights set on Moses. That's understandable: Moses is rightly revered as a great leader, who led the

people out of slavery and into freedom. But Jesus is as quick as Moses was before him to remind them that: “it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven...but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven”.

This true bread is bread that will not perish. It is the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Not just for today, to satisfy our immediate hunger. And not just for one group of people, captured in one story, set in time. But for all people, for all time.

Maybe that crowd in Capernaum finally begin to understand when they ask Jesus: “Sir, give us this bread always”. And Jesus says: “I am the bread of life”. The one sent by God to give life to the world - life that is eternal. Life that is rooted in our relationship with Jesus.

If we can focus on Jesus and feed on the spiritual bread that he offers to us then we will create the kingdom of God here on earth. We will be open to the message of God’s love for all people, and we will be on the road to salvation and hope for the future.

Let us pray with the people who are following Him:

“Lord, give us this bread always.” Amen

Affirmation of faith

Let us declare our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

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

Prayers of Intercession led by Fiona Whelan

Dear Lord, we pray this morning for all those seeking new beginnings. For those seeking to deepen their faith, for those seeking to reengage with their faith and for those looking to make sense of the world around them that we hope, with Your grace, will find their faith.

We give you thanks and praise for all the members of our Lordsbridge Team who have provided so many new and innovative ways for us to worship during these difficult times. From small acts of kindness shown to each other, to the creative ways our team of Ministers have enabled us all to continue to engage in services, we give You thanks.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Dear Lord, we pray this morning for those hoping for peaceful new beginnings. We pray especially for the people of Lebanon enduring such difficult times as their civil unrest continues. We pray for all those living in areas of trouble, for all those displaced by war and living in refugee camps or making dangerous journeys to secure a safer life for themselves and their families. And we pray for those who see no option but to stay where they are in daily fear.

We give you thanks and praise for all the volunteers, aid and agency workers who regularly place themselves in danger to bring help to Your people.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Dear Lord, we pray for all those who find new beginnings hard or challenging. We pray for our University graduates and school leavers who are entering the world of work in a time of such uncertainty. We pray for those families who may face unexpected or unseen challenges over the weeks of the school vacation. We pray for those whose circumstances have changed and are fearful of their new beginnings. And we pray for those preparing to leave home or care for the first time.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Dear Lord, we ask for Your strength for those who we know who are unwell, and for all those mourning the loss of loved ones. In silence we bring before you those for whom we now pray

Silence is kept

Father please hold them in Your love and strength.
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Dear Lord, we give You thanks and praise for all the new beginnings that come before us each day. We celebrate the ever-changing nature around us. The miracle of new life. We thank you for the opportunities that are afforded to us each and every day and pray that you would help us to see them when things are tough. From the rainbow shining through after torrential rain to the fruit ripening on bushes help us to see the wonder of the world around us and the miracle of new beginnings.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

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

Collect

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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 forever. Amen.**

Song: Here is bread by Graham Kendrick

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| 1. Here is bread, here is wine
Christ is with us, he is with us
Break the bread, drink the wine
Christ is with us here. | 2. Here is grace, here is peace
Christ is with us, he is with us
Know his grace, find his peace
Feast on Jesus here |
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Chorus

In this bread there is healing
In this cup there's life forever
In this moment, by the Spirit
Christ is with us here

3. Here we are, joined in one
Christ is with us, he is with us
We'll proclaim, till he comes
Jesus crucified

Conclusion

Christ, who has nourished us with himself the living bread,
make us one in praise and love,
and raise us up at the last day;
and the blessing of God the father,
God the Son and God the Holy Spirit
be upon us all now and evermore. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ.