

**Sunday 8th August -
Tenth Sunday after Trinity
Led by Rev Priscilla Slusar**



Opening Words

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

God in Christ has revealed his glory.
Come let us worship.

From the rising of the sun to its setting
the Lord's name is greatly to be praised.

Give him praise, you servants of the Lord.
O praise the name of the Lord!
Lord, speak to us that we may hear your word.
Move among us that we may behold your glory.
Receive our prayers that we may learn to trust you. Amen

Hymn

1. Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour,
First-begotten from the dead,
Thou alone, our strong defender,
Liftest up thy people's head.
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Jesu, true and living Bread!

2. Here our humblest homage pay we;
Here in loving reverence bow;
Here for Faith's discernment pray we,
Lest we fail to know thee now.
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Thou art here, we ask not how.

3. Though the lowliest form doth veil thee
As of old in Bethlehem,
Here as there thine angels hail thee,
Branch and Flower of Jesse's stem.
Alleluia, Alleluia,
We in worship join with them.

4. Paschal Lamb, thine Offering, finished
Once for all when thou wast slain,
In its fullness undiminished
Shall for evermore remain,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Cleansing souls from every stain.

5. Life-imparting heavenly Manna,
Stricken Rock with streaming side,
Heaven and earth with loud hosanna
Worship thee, the Lamb who died,
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Risen, ascended, glorified!

Meditation – on part of the Lord's Prayer

“Give us this day our daily bread”

We say the words of the Lord's Prayer so often that it may become routine, without considering the meaning of the words and phrases. Let us spend a short time today reflecting on the phrase: “Give us this day our daily bread”.

This is Jesus' own prayer – given to his disciples, given to us. God's Spirit speaks to us through this prayer. What does that mean for you? Think of the number of times that food is mentioned in the Bible, often in the context of God feeding his people. Psalm 23 says “Thou shalt prepare a table before me, in the presence of my foes.” The kingdom of God is represented as a banquet. The first miracle that Jesus performed was at a wedding feast. Think about the ways in which you celebrate special occasions in your life – is food an important part of that? How does the food and drink add to the celebration?

But what about “our daily bread”? What promise of the kingdom does God provide in our daily lives? Jesus said “I am the bread of life” – in the Lord’s Prayer we ask that we may be fed with God himself. What steps can we take to be nourished spiritually by Jesus?

Jesus celebrated the kingdom of God by sharing his feasts with all sorts of people. How can we share the gift of “our daily bread” with others?

“Give us this day our daily bread”.

Confession

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

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

In your mercy

forgive what we have been,

help us to amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be;

that we may do justly,

love mercy,

and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen

Readings by Deborah Spencer

1 Kings 19.4-8

⁴Elijah went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: ‘It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.’ ⁵Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, ‘Get up and eat.’ ⁶He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, ‘Get up and eat,

otherwise the journey will be too much for you.’⁸ He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

John 6.35,41-51

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.
⁴¹ Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven.’⁴² They were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven”?’⁴³ Jesus answered them, ‘Do not complain among yourselves.⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.⁴⁷ Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.’

Reflection by Sue Nelms

I have really enjoyed watching the Olympics this year. Even if you weren't watching the games, you have probably picked up on one of the big stories of the games, that of the withdrawal from the gymnastics team final of Simone Biles. It takes courage to admit that you might not be in the right place physically or mentally when everyone has such high expectations of you and fortunately Miss Biles seems to have people around her to keep her safe and well and she came back and won a bronze medal in the one event that she entered. In our Old Testament reading this morning, we learned that it is not only famous athletes who experience problems with their mental health. Elijah was in a really bad way. Prior to this morning's reading,

he had been delivering God's word to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and they did not want to hear it. Elijah's life was in danger and he responded to Queen Jezebel's threats by running away. A very human thing to do; I suspect that we all do it from time to time.

Elijah was tired, drained, wrung out. Despite having worked so hard in God's name, the very human Elijah was now overcome by fear. He felt that he had nothing left to give. The Message Bible talks about Elijah 'wanting in the worst way to be done with it all – to just die'. It is such a desperate picture.

Can you imagine it? Elijah, that great man of God, wanted to be dead because he felt so desperate. Jezebel had killed so many of God's prophets, and now she had turned her focus on to Elijah so he has taken refuge in the wilderness. On one hand Elijah is God's major prophet of the day, the man who strikes fear into people like Jezebel who have turned their backs on God. On the other hand he is simply an ordinary man, who is exhausted, depressed and has had enough, so he goes to sleep, a very natural response.

Although he is in the wilderness, however, Elijah is not alone as he thought. God is with him and sends an angel to look after him and here we have one of those special intimate moments.

The angel wakes Elijah and gives him food and water. Sounds simple but look at the picture more closely. As Elijah is gently shaken awake, he becomes aware of a freshly baked bread cake, in fact not just baked but still baking on the hot coals. I love the smell of fresh bread, whether it is a crusty cob spread with lashings of melting butter or whether it is a freshly baked naan, paratha or other flat bread. Pair that with lovely refreshing spring water and you have such a simple but special feast.

But Elijah wasn't fixed yet – it wasn't that simple and such things never are. He needed to sleep some more before being woken again to be fed and refreshed once more by the angel, in preparation for a long journey, 40 days and 40 nights worth, on his way to Mount Horeb, the mount of God. The mount where Moses met God in the burning bush and the mount where he was later given the 10 commandments.

Mount Horeb is a place where people meet with God, and later in the story, Elijah does indeed do that.

The bread that God provided for Elijah was life restoring, but like the manna the Israelites enjoyed on their journey through the wilderness, it was not the bread of life that Jesus referred to in our passage from John's gospel. At some point Elijah will again have been hungry and in need of food.

We have heard a lot about bread over recent weeks. Two weeks ago we heard about Jesus feeding over 5,000 people. Last week Priscilla spoke about the link between Jesus and the Old Testament feeding of the Israelites when they fled from Egypt. This week we have heard of Elijah being fed in the wilderness and the lectionary ties this in with the passage from John's gospel in which Jesus states that he is the 'bread of life'.

It might just be me but this statement that he is the bread of life is one of the 'I am' statements that I find hard to get my head around. I can cope with the idea of being a sheep in need of a shepherd and Jesus being that shepherd for example, but the idea of Jesus being bread for me to eat is a bit trickier, perhaps due being a vegetarian for some years! So let's look at the passage from John's gospel. Whatever else we see in this passage, Jesus is making an important point because he says it not once, not twice, but three times in this one section alone – Jesus is the bread of life.

Earlier on in the chapter, Jesus had reminded his audience about the Israelites receiving manna from heaven and explained that it was not Moses who fed them, but God himself, and this manna was not the true bread of heaven because the next day the Israelites were all physically hungry again.

Yet here is Jesus, saying that he is the bread of life and that whoever comes to him will never be hungry and whoever believes in him will never be thirsty. Really puzzling stuff. His audience will have understood about their ancestors being fed with the manna in the desert but they don't understand the idea of Jesus being food from heaven because as far as they are concerned Jesus was fully human with human parents, Joseph and Mary from Nazareth.

He reminds them that their ancestors who ate the manna have since died and states that he is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat of it and not die. Now they are really confused

because they take it quite literally and debate it at great length later in the chapter.

I suspect that many of us struggle with trying to understand this passage literally; that we may see Jesus as physical bread, particularly when we receive the eucharist. But Jesus is actually raising the statement to a spiritual dimension. Bread represents food that is fundamental to our existence and survival physically, but we also need to thrive spiritually too.

What Jesus is saying is that his word is fundamental to our spiritual existence. By feeding on the words he gives us, we can grow spiritually because of his relationship with God, his heavenly Father, which he then shares with us. When he talks about people coming to him and receiving his bread, he is talking about people accepting his words, his love, his teachings, focusing on spiritual rather than on material things. And as we come to him, accepting the invitation he offers us, we try to become more like him.

Why does this matter?

The Jews were under the impression that God had chosen them by birth; as the Jews they were his chosen people, they had to do nothing. What Jesus was saying was that they actually had to accept the gift that God was giving them, to be fed by him. God sent Jesus in order to draw people closer to Him, and the people who accepted the invitation and responded to God the Son, were also accepting the invitation of God the Father.

God chooses us, each and every one of us, but we do have to respond to His invitation. If we ignore a party invitation, we miss out on the whole event.

In John chapter 6 verse 44, Jesus talks about God drawing people towards Jesus, who, he says, will raise them all up on the last day. If you think of horses drawing a plough through soil, you get an idea of some resistance, but as the plough passes through it turns the soil and aerates it, making it better for cultivation.

Verse 45 refers back to Isaiah 54.13 which talks about “all children being taught by the Lord and great shall their prosperity be”. We need to be taught by God, nourished by Him, and in Jesus he has given us the way to take on that spiritual nourishment.

When Jesus says that he is the bread of life that came down from heaven, his invitation to come to him, to believe in him is actually an invitation to become like him, to live in him, to trust in, rely on, and cling to him. It is a trusting love. It is not simply the physical love that God showed by feeding Elijah, it is something much more fundamental to our existence.

The reward for such love is everlasting life, and who other than Jesus has ever been able to offer that? Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in 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**

cf Ephesians 3

Prayers of Intercession led by Rick Nelms

Lord Jesus we want to thank you for the many blessings that you bring into our lives. Thank you for the certainty that your life, death and resurrection bring. Certainty that through believing in you and putting ourselves right with perfect Father God, we will get to spend eternity with you in heaven.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus You 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'. Through your Holy Spirit, help us to understand this analogy and to grasp the implications for our own lives.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we pray for all the Christian churches that make up your Church here on Earth. We pray that the Queen will be blessed by her role in the Church of England, for our Archbishops, Justin and Stephen and for our Bishops, Stephen and Dagmar. We pray for Ely Diocese international links with Kigali in Rwanda, Nordkirche in Germany and Vellore in India. We pray for the Changing Market Towns and Reach Ely diocesan projects. We pray for all the clergy, lay leaders, churchwardens, PCCs and the many others who contribute to the running of the Lordsbridge team. We pray for all the congregations in the Lordsbridge team; however they meet, in church or other buildings, outside in wild and forest church or online. We pray to be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ and for our churches to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the beauty of creation, for the glories of the cosmos, for the ephemeral beauty of cloudscapes, sunrises and sunsets, for the astonishing biodiversity of this tiny blue pearl, for the weird beauty of your extraordinary design for subatomic physics and for the diversity of humanity. We thank you that all things came into being through you and that you hold everything together. We pray against the changing climate, the burning forests, the melting ice, the rising seawater levels, the devastating ongoing extinction event and the genocide, apartheid and discrimination so commonly experienced by indigenous peoples. We pray for the Church to take up her proper role in providing world leadership in stewardship of the environment; in striving to safeguard the integrity of creation; and sustaining and renewing the life of the Earth. We pray that every individual person understands that the future of the Earth is our choice.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we pray for the leaders of the nations. We pray for democratically elected leaders, that they will live up to their promises and the expectations of the people who elected them. We pray for dictators, that they either remain in power through excellent leadership, or hand power back to the people and hold elections. We

pray against the violence perpetrated by some regimes against their own people and against the corruption prevalent in so many parts of the world. We pray for your light to shine into the lives of all leaders across the world, so that decisions are made honestly, accountably and visibly. We pray against the many violent conflicts that continue to rage across so many parts of the world, both within and between nations, and the crime that blights so many lives worldwide. We pray for the church to take her proper role in providing leadership to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we pray for our local communities across the Lordsbridge team. We pray for our friends, our neighbours, our families and especially for those people we find it hard to like. We pray that you will provide encouragement and blessing to those who are already Christians. We pray for all those who do not yet know the love and light of Christ in their lives. We pray that through our lives, our words, our actions and our loving service of the people around us the Good News of the Kingdom will be proclaimed.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus we pray for the needs of people who suffer. We pray for all those people who provide for those who suffer, whether through work in the caring professions, volunteering, caring at home or providing services like shops, internet, media and maintenance of infrastructure. We pray for those trapped in poverty, for people who are homeless and for people who are lonely. We pray for people who are recovering from accidents or trauma and for those who have acute physical illness. We pray for those people who have long-term physical illness and those who live with constant pain. In the light of today's Old Testament reading, we pray especially today for everyone who experiences mental distress as part of their lives, whether it is a short episode or a lifelong struggle. We pray against depression, anxiety and the full range of other mental health issues. We pray that people struggling with distress will find blessing, peace and love in Your light.

We pray for those people whose needs are spiritual, either because they have chosen false Gods, or no God at all. We pray especially for those people who are spiritually hungry yet have never heard the Good News. We pray that through our loving service to those around us people's lives will be improved.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we pray for those who are dying and for those who are in grief, however long ago the bereavement occurred. We give thanks for the lives of all those who have died in the Faith of Christ, both those known to us and also those whose faith is known only to You Lord Jesus. We thank you for the certainty that faith provides, that we shall be reunited in eternity.

Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our Prayer**

Lord Jesus, in a time of silence we bring to you our personal prayers at this time.

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

Collect

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord's Prayer

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 for ever. Amen**

Hymn Praise and Thanksgiving (Tune: Morning has broken)

Praise and thanksgiving, Father, we offer,
For all things living thou madest good;
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
Hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.

Father, providing food for thy children,
Thy wisdom guiding teaches us share
One with another, so that, rejoicing
With us, our brother may know thy care.

Then will thy blessing reach every people;
all men confessing thy gracious hand.
Where thy will reigneth no man will hunger:
thy love sustaineth; fruitful the land.

Blessing

May God the Father give us joy;
May God the Son give us grace;
May God the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with love.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with us now and always. **Amen**

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