

Morning Service for Beckminster via Zoom Sunday, 2nd August 2020

Theme: Physically distanced but still connected

Call to worship

"The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation." Psalm 145: 8 – 9

Opening Prayer

God our father, giver and sustainer of life

At the start of our worship today,

We worship you

We adore you

We give you all the glory

For you are worthy to be praised

You have called us out of the darkness of sin

into the marvellous light of your holy presence.

Therefore, we lift our praises to your holy name.

We bless you Lord!

From generation to generation we bow before your throne of grace;

Thanking you for everything you have done and for everything you will do.

Accept these our praises Father, son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

©Gabriel Gidi *Adapted from various sources including the bible*

We continue our worship as we sing with the National Methodist Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKJfs8C14yc>

StF Hymn 351 - In Christ Alone My Hope is Found

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,

The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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Gospel Reading: **John 6:1-14**

Feeding the Five Thousand

6 After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. **2** A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. **3** Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. **4** Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. **5** When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' **6** He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. **7** Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' **8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, **9** 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' **10** Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. **11** Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. **12** When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' **13** So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. **14** When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

Meditation:

May these words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. **Amen**

Sermon

This week's Gospel reading on the Lectionary is Matthew 14: 13-21. It tells the story of the feeding of five thousand. The story of the feeding of the five thousand appears in all four gospels.

This is the only miracle to be recorded in all four gospels. I prefer John's version of the story so I changed the reading to John's gospel. The main details of this event are agreed by all the gospel writers. However, unlike the synoptic accounts, John adds details that are not in the other gospels.

- A large crowd kept following him, **because they saw the signs** that he was doing for the sick. John calls them signs because they led people to seek for Jesus.
- John notes that the **Passover** was near because he linked the following discussion about the heavenly bread with this feast
- John shifts the initiative to **Jesus himself**. John also names Philip and Andrew, compared with the more general 'disciples' of the synoptics.

The breaking of bread here is both historical and forward looking. It reminds us of the Passover meal in Exodus. However, it also foreshadows Passover meal that Christ himself would later have as the Last Supper.

In John's version Jesus asks the Philip the question:

"Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

The question shows Jesus' compassion for the people; his loving and caring nature. Jesus notices the needs of the crowd and he acts to meet the needs of the crowd. This is reinforced by the words: "He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do."

Predictably Philip, **like most of us**, describes the worst-case scenario. He paints the picture of a hopeless case.

"Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

This is Philip telling Jesus that they don't have enough money to buy food for the people. Philip forgets who he is talking to and focuses on the maths of their problem. Like the crowds Philip has also seen the Jesus' signs (miracles) but his logical side kicks in.

Andrew then chips in: "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"

Like Philip, he sees this as a hopeless effort. There is too little to make a difference.

Philip's response to Jesus' request shows a natural but purely human sense of the occasion. He is intensely practical in his calculations. Andrew is a little better in informing Jesus of the hopelessly inadequate supplies available. However, he also took a literalistic approach. But none of the disciples was to know what was in the mind of Jesus.

Then Jesus, who knew what he was going to do swings into action.

"Make the people sit down."

"Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted."

John stresses that the people were all satisfied, which means it was a full meal and not a merely symbolic act. The twelve baskets of fragments are proof of God's generous bounty. Yet in this world of plenty others are going hungry. The gathering of the fragments is both physical and metaphorical. Every piece is gathered and preserved – to avoid wastefulness. We meet at a time when society is fragmented; when we are trying to pick up the pieces from the effects of Covid-

19. Gathering the fragments also means being an outward facing church; an inviting church; a church that stands up for justice. In the old Testament the powerless are often defined by **four tropes or motifs**: the **widow**, the **orphan**, the **alien** (foreigner), the **poor**; those people who often exist on the **edges of society**; those who **fall through the cracks** in our support structure.

A church which desires to reflect the **nature of the God of justice and compassion** must take the **responsibility of caring** for those who are not cared for by others. I am inspired by the work of Rev Dr. Inderjit Bhogal with sanctuary cities, sanctuary schools and sanctuary churches because it is a **practical response** to the challenges facing **our world, our country and our church**. How would we describe our church? Is it a place where all can find sanctuary? Is it a compassionate church? Is it a sharing church? Is it a church where brother and sister serve each other; where we are as Christ to each other?

So what lessons can we draw from all this?

- **Jesus shows God's love through hospitality; providing a meal; giving sustenance. God's love is shown in sharing.**
- **We need to trust in God; to listen when he asks us to do something. Once Jesus had spoken, even the practical and logical Philip and the literal Andrew followed his lead.**
- **God provides what is adequate for our needs and more**
- **As we slowly emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to have the same compassion that Christ shows – we need to be alive to the pain and suffering; alive to the fact that not all of us have been as lucky as we are; that some may be struggling with finances, health issues, mental health issues.**
- **People can only comprehend God's love when they have experienced it. They can only experience God's love when others show it to them.**
- **We need to gather the fragments (be physically distant but still connected).**

We continue our worship as sing together with Graham Kendrick:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO1G-o7Yj-c>

StF Hymn 693 - Beauty for Brokenness

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

*God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame*

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

The Offertory

Prayers for Others and Ourselves

God of compassion teach us the compassion that was in Christ Jesus. Help us to see the need in others; to respond with love and care. Spirit of God Spirit of God. Breathe on Your church. Pour out Your presence. Speak through Your word. We pray for the universal church that it may positively respond to your call for justice. We pray for governments of all nations that they may rule with compassion and justice. We pray for all who are in trouble or distress. We pray for members of this congregation who are unwell or in despair.

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us
from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

Revd Steven Wild

*Remove the burdens from our shoulders, O God.
Place a song of joy in our heart again.
Help us to notice the beautiful work of your hands - in the little flower,
the chirping of the birds, the sun on our back
and the silence of the night.
Be our strength to face this week. Amen.*

Revd Romeo Pedro

We ask all this in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**