**Morning Praise @ Home 18th August 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading John 6: 51 – 58

### Reflection from John

A young boy developed an aversion to his mother’s hands and didn’t like her touching him.

The problem was that although the mother was a very beautiful woman her hands were very unattractive - red, marked and badly scarred and the boy became unwilling to hold her hand on the way to school and pulled away as she sought to cuddle him.

One day the boy’s father felt it was time to explain something to his young son. He explained that a few years earlier as the boy was beginning to crawl, Mum was with the boy in the lounge when the phone rang. She went to answer it and the conversation went on for a long time until she heard a scream from the **lounge – just feet away.**

The boy had managed to crawl near the fire, removed the guard and his clothes began to ignite. With nothing at hand to extinguish the burning clothes the mother used her own hands.

Amazingly the boy was not burned but Mum’s hands were permanently marked and scarred.

It took the young boy some time to understand what had happened but over time his feelings for his mother and in particular her hands changed.

He became proud of his mum and yes - proud of her scarred hands because he now knew that they were a visible demonstration of a mother’s love.

In a similar way, when we look and think about Jesus on the Cross we see his hands and his feet, pierced, tortured and covered in blood. Hard as it is to imagine he did all that for you and for me.

If you ever doubt God’s love for you, look back at Jesus on the Cross and be reminded of the lengths Christ went to love and care for you.

Mind blowing, isn’t it? Or at least it’s meant to be.

Jesus gave us Holy Communion as a reminder of the cost of his friendship and love for us.

He gave us bread and wine as visible - touchable signs of his body and blood which were given for us. And this simple act is meant to nourish our souls again and again.

The Gospel for today begins at John 6 verse 51. *‘****I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live for ever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.’***

*And later on in verses 57 to 58* ***Just as the Living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven………he who feeds on me – this Bread – will live forever.***

All of John 6 is about Jesus the Redeemer as the one who nourishes and sustains those who live for him and follow him. His entire life is the summation of God’s everlasting love. It’s a life intent to us being restored to God through faith in Jesus and thereafter being fed by Him - enriched by him, kept by him.

John 6 is full of language which is full of inexhaustible mystery and meaning. It is all about Jesus being the source of life for all who turn to him in faith. And Holy Communion is his gift to us – it’s a short-hand sign full of mystery and meaning.

It can be celebrated anywhere and everywhere in all kinds of places and different circumstances always as a reminder of the love of Jesus. It can take place in a field or a barn, in a home, in a hospital. on a battlefield and even in a Church building.

The service itself has so much in it and carries so much significance as an act of love and sacrifice by a friend, that you simply cannot come to the end of its meaning.

The regular teaching of scripture and the evocative symbolism of the Service nourish us beyond the symbols with Christ himself. So, when we come to Christ over and over with this longing and this conviction in our heart: that here he nourishes us by faith, then the Lord's Supper will be a deep and wonderful act of worship.

We believe that the bread and wine are emblems or symbols of the real, literal body of Christ that was crucified in history and today is in heaven at the Father's right hand. But we believe that there can be a real feeding on Christ spiritually by faith - not on his physical body, but on his real, spiritual presence – His resurrected self. And even though a believer can nourish himself any time and anywhere on the presence of Christ in his word, there is a special nourishing offered in eating the Lord's Supper and hearing the preaching of God's word.

This is a feast given in love by the Bread of Life himself!

I end then with another story.

Many years ago, the Catholic Archbishop of Paris was preaching on Easter Day at the Cathedral of Notre Dame. He told the story of three young lads who were messing about one Saturday on the streets of Paris. They wandered into the cathedral and one of the boys dared his friends to go to the front of the Cathedral and go into a confessional and make up a list of dreadful sins to confess to a priest.

Nervously the boy went forward, entered the confessional and made up a list of the worst sins and crimes he could muster. After 20 minutes the boy ran out of things to say. The Priest was silent at first and after a long pause spoke up.

**I want you to go and stand before the great Cross above the Altar and look at Christ on the Cross and say – You died for me and I don’t give a damn’.**

The boy left the confessional and went to the front of the Cathedral realising he had been rumbled. He looked at the tortured and dying figure on the Cross and began to say the words - You died for me and I don’t give a damn………

He managed only three words and was overcome with tears.

The Archbishop ended his sermon at that point and said: *I know this story is true because I was that boy.*

**Amen**

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**Affirmation of faith**

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

**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?

**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?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Heavenly Father, we come before you in the greatness of your love and lift up our hearts in prayer and praise. We thank you that your presence in our lives is open to each and every one of us through Jesus Christ and that you invite us all to draw near to you in faith and thanksgiving.

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

Let us pray for our church here in Burton and Shotwick as we pray for your blessing on its activities and its hopes and aspirations. We give thanks for those who come to serve, for the ministry of John and others and for those who seek to support the church in its wider ministry.

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

We pray in gratitude for the worship and fellowship that this church provides; for its care and its teaching of people of all generations and for its nurture and love towards one another.

Dear Lord and Father, as we read your word from today’s Bible reading, help us to grasp the meaning of the gospel which you have entrusted to us, and give us grace to live by all that we hear.

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

We pray for those who are less fortunate than ourselves; those who live in developing countries and areas of the world where there is very little social, economic or political stability.

Teach us to be ever mindful of those who have become weary with the relentless struggle to keep alive; for those who are not able to look forward to a meal and a comfortable bed, and those who barely have the essential necessities of life.

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

We pray for people within our own church and our own local community who are ill or housebound, in hospital or in care. Help them to have confidence in doctors and carers who provide the support they need. We pray also for your blessing on our own pastoral aid group who seek to provide support.

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

Heavenly Father, we pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for members of our own families who have died, either recently or long ago, and whose presence we miss so much.

We pray for families throughout the world whose lives and families are being torn apart through war. We remember in our prayers this morning the conflicts in Israel and Palestine and in Ukraine as well as those who suffer through famine and malnutrition in other parts of the world.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**