**Morning Praise @ Home 21st July 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 Mark 6:30 – 44

### Reflection from John Feeding the 5000

Do you remember that last week Philip told us of his love of Birthday parties. We had cake and candles. He compared his birthday parties as a boy with the awful birthday party in which John the Baptist lost his head.

Well today also has two feasts:

Last week from the same Gospel of Mark, Herod had a wild party and this week Jesus feeds 5000.

The first feast was hosted by King Herod Agrippa; the second feast was hosted by King Jesus.

At the first feast, only the nobles and the elite of the territory were invited. At the second feast, it was the *am ha’aretz*, the people of the land, the commoners, who gathered on the plain to be fed through the provisions unexpectedly offered by Jesus.

At the first feast, the food was prepared by gourmet chefs. At the second feast, it was prepared by the hand of the Messiah via a young lad.

At the first feast, there was exotic entertainment and dancing. At the second feast, the first order was Jesus teaching God’s ways to people who were spiritually curious. Hungry.

Finally, the highlight of Herod’s feast was the bloody execution of a man of God, but at Jesus’ feast there were no executions, only compassion made manifest in a miracle of feeding.

What’s going on?

Having been sent out on mission the disciples came back to Jesus and told Him all about their first missionary journeys. He said to them: Let’s go away and stand back and rest awhile. Tell me what happened and what you’ve learned. That’s the sort of question that Jesus puts to every Christian and every congregation from time to time.

Jesus asks each of us: what have you learned from me recently?

As they tried to find a solitary place, Mark tells us that many were coming and going, and the crowd was so great that the disciples did not even have time to eat. So, they tried to find somewhere in the boat by themselves.

Most likely, Jesus and the disciples were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. They did not get in the boat and go fifteen or twenty miles all the way across the sea. Rather, it is much more likely that the boat was going along the shore, either to the north or south a short distance, trying to find a quiet place.

The huge crowd was stirred up by not only the reputation of Jesus but also by the disciples going to each village and each city round about.

They were already hungry. Hungry for food, yes, but also hungry to know more of God which is exactly where growth and God’s activity flourishes.

So Jesus changed the plan and seeing this vast crowd was full of compassion.

What sparked this profound compassion in Jesus? What did he see?

He looked at the great multitude and said, “They’re like sheep without a shepherd.” He saw people running. He saw people determined to get to a certain point, but they had no idea why they were doing what they were doing. They were rushing aimlessly. They were moving without any real understood purpose. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

When Jesus saw people acting like that, he was not angry; he felt sorry for them: “These people need a shepherd.” Throughout the Old Testament many of the prophecies of the coming Messiah spoke of a Shepherd-King, who was to be the Good Shepherd, who will be the One who lays down His life for His sheep. In His compassion, the Good Shepherd looked at the human beings in the crowd acting like sheep without a shepherd, and He wanted to address their need immediately. So, he began to teach them – to nurture them.

The primary role of the pastor in the New Testament church is to feed hungry sheep. We live in a time when churches have become weak because people demand the pastor do everything but that primary role. But 95 percent of the pastor’s labour in the church is supposed to nurture faith – to teach the hungry about the Living God. The pastor is not called to be a counsellor. The pastor is not called to be an administrator or to be a town leader. The pastor’s mission is to feed the sheep.

Whatever your idea of a vicar - Does it line up with God’s idea?

[Jesus later gave this commission to Peter beside the same sea when He said, “Do you love me?” and Peter said, “You know I love You” three times. Three times Jesus said, “If you love Me, feed My sheep.” This is not my congregation sitting in this church. This is His congregation. You are not my sheep. You are His sheep. My job is to feed you with food that will not make you sick, food that will not poison you but food that will nurture you—the very Word of God.]

When Jesus had compassion on the people, He taught them, which we might miss in the rest of the drama of this story. We might think, “The feeding doesn’t begin till later, when He multiplies the fish and the loaves.” No, the whole time, Jesus was feeding the sheep with truth and with his living Word.

Jesus began to teach the crowd many things, and the day was coming to an end far spent, so the disciples came to Jesus and said: “This is a deserted place. You know, we’re outside the city. We’re away from the villages. It’s a nice grassy plain, but it is deserted here, and it’s late. Send them away, so they may go into the surrounding country and villages to buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat.”

Do you notice what’s going on here? The disciples are telling Jesus what to do.

Not a good idea so Jesus said: “You feed them,”  “You feed them.” Once again, they were flabbergasted when they heard this. They said: “How do you expect us to feed them? It would cost two hundred denarii. It would take a year’s salary to buy enough bread to feed this mob. Where are we going to get the money? We don’t have that kind of money.”

How many times have you heard that? “We can’t do this. We don’t have what’s necessary to accomplish this task.” “We can’t do that. It would be a whole year’s salary.”

Jesus said: “Well, what do you have? Go see what you have.” So, the disciples questioned the people and told Jesus, “We have a couple of loaves of bread and a couple of fish.” Jesus essentially responded: “Take what you have and let Me bless it, and we’ll see what God does when you give Him what you have. We’ll see what God does when you do what you can do. You do what you can do, you give what you can give, and then get out of the way and watch God work.”

Don’t try and rationalise the miracle that followed. Don’t turn it into a human story of people learning to share - instead try and get used to the idea that God can do exceptional things at exceptional times. You do what you can do, you give what you can give, and then get out of the way and watch God work. **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?

**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 led by Ruth**

Let us pray for our troubled world and all who live in it.

We pray for those who are hungry and for those who strive to feed them. We pray for all those who give their time to foodbanks in a time where more and more people are having to use foodbanks We pray for those who possess the means to end the scandal of want in the midst of plenty and grant them the wisdom to take action.

We pray for our new government and all the decisions they have to make. We pray for an end to petty point scoring and obstruction, and that all political parties would work together to make a fairer, more just society.

Grant to the world’s leaders wisdom, and compassion for those who suffer.  May love prevail where there is strife and hatred. We pray for the peace of the world, that all people may live in harmony, celebrating their differences and respecting others’ beliefs and way of life.  We pray for all who have lost loved ones in war, whoever they are.

We pray for our church, for our local community, and for our families and friends. We pray for travellers and for those away on holiday, that they may return refreshed and enriched by their experiences.  We remember, too, those who for reasons of poverty, fear or ill-health are unable to go away on holiday.

We pray for all who suffer in mind or body and for those who care for them. We pray for the sick; for those who mourn; for those without faith, hope or love.

We pray for any known to us who are in special need of our prayers at this time.  We remember them now in a moment of silence ….

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**

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