

Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.
Sunday 2nd August 2026. '5+2= more than you can imagine.'
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship. Psalm 145 : 8-9

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

STF 99

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
alleluia, alleluia!
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam:

*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

O rushing wind that is so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
O rising morn, in praise rejoice;
and lights of evening, find a voice:

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'
O fire, so masterful and bright,
giving to all both warmth and light:

Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfolds rich blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,
let them his glory also show:

And all who are of tender heart
forgiving others, take your part,
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia!'
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God, and on him cast your care:

And now, most kind and gentle death,
waiting to hush our fading breath,
O praise him, alleluia!
You homeward lead the child of God,
and Christ the Lord the way has trod:

Let all things their creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

Prayers of adoration and confession.

Dear God,
You are the King of all.
We join the sun, the moon, and the stars in praising You.
Thank You for the strong wind and the floating clouds.
Thank You for the clear water and the bright, warming fire.
Thank you for this beautiful world and all the works of your creation.
Thank you for all that has made me give thanks for your love this week.

We also praise You for the earth.
For the bounty and abundance of good gifts.
It gives us food, flowers, and fruit.
It gives us a home and people to share our life with.

Lord, help us to forgive others.
Help us to forgive ourselves.
Help us to turn to you in repentance for our faults and failures
Give us peace when we are sad or in pain, help us to cast our heavy burdens on You.
Forgive us for when we allow our difficulties to stop us from turning to you.
Help us to always worship You with humble grateful hearts.
We praise you. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Bible reading Matthew 14: 13-21

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Reflection

Many years ago whilst on sabbatical and helping with a conservation project in the Bay islands in Honduras. I was on breakfast duty. Which meant getting up early before the camp awoke and preparing breakfast for forty people. Weary eyed I stumbled into the kitchen to be met by, as we affectionately called him, 'the camp commandant'. He told me to go back to bed and tell everyone else not to get up. Apparently our food cupboards had been raided in the night and we didn't have enough food to feed everyone. Now in the bay islands as with the islanders we were dependent on the supply ships bringing in food and it wasn't that plentiful or regular. So no supermarket to pop down the creek to by boat, as was our only option for getting supplies, from the shack that was the only store. I looked around the decimated shelves we had two eggs, flour and a gallon of orange juice. Now if I had had to think about it, not in my wildest dreams would I have thought you could make enough pancakes for forty people who would proclaim it to be the best breakfast ever! Something inspired me to try and we were all fed.

Have you had a similar experience? When your resources seemed impossibly low for the task ahead and yet it's like a miracle happens.

In our reading today the disciples are in a similar situation. The people are hungry and Jesus tells the disciples to feed them. They only have five loaves and two fish and we know this story so well. The multitude are fed and there's an abundance of leftovers. How?

First Jesus asked for what was available to be brought to him, then he takes care of the recipients, getting them to be comfortable and sit down. Then he gives thanks and breaks the bread and asks for it to be shared. So let's imagine the scene and try to see what it has to say to ourselves about those times when we feel overwhelmed and without sufficient resources. Now this isn't a recipe for a greedy success in life, but a lesson in faith.

So first let's take stock:

The first thing we need to do is just what the crowd did, come to Jesus with our needs.

In the scripture Jesus has been ministering to the crowd healing their sick and it's getting late and they are hungry. The disciples would have sent them off to a village to get their own food, with their own funds. These people are in need and those who are closest to Jesus, His disciples; well, what do you think about their compassion?

I guess they would have been concerned about Jesus' needs. He had just taken time out to cope with the awful news about the beheading of John the Baptist. No doubt grief stricken and overwhelmed by the inhumanity of it all. Yet when Jesus sees the multitude of needy he spends the whole day attending to their needs. It's a difficult situation to say what is right and what is wrong. Humanly speaking if Jesus is not looked after, how will he have the strength to carry on ministering to the people? But the needs of this huge crowd, five thousand men and not counting the women and children, are pressing. It is hard to imagine how great the crowd is. Perhaps we are not meant to. Just to accept that it's overwhelming and Jesus is moved to compassion.

There are so many desperate situations in the news. We have pictures of war torn devastated communities, cities and villages that have lost everything in natural disasters. The recent Venezuelan earthquake for example, nearly a thousand people died, over three thousand seriously injured and thousands displaced. These are overwhelming situations that we might feel as if our small contribution is not going to make any difference.

There are a myriad of other situations that we have faced and still face where we feel overwhelmed and without the resources to cope. "I'm drained by it all", might be our answer. In situations of grief, hardship, even days when life for whatever reason feels overwhelming. You could call it a five loaves and two fishes day. Our insufficiency is draining. We do the maths and we can't make it to be enough in resources or energy.

We need to face up to our insufficiency and own it. Too much energy is wasted running around a problem that we know we can't solve. We need to take stock of the situation and ask ourselves:-

What are the immediate needs:

Going back to the scripture passage, it's hard to imagine that the majority of the crowd were hail and hearty. Jesus, we are told is healing the sick. What the various sickness's were, we don't know. It's a bigger picture than looking around the doctors crowded waiting room. We don't know what ailments people are carrying. Only they are in need. You can imagine the buzz that might have gone through the crowd as those at the front hear the disciples suggesting that the crowd be sent away to solve their own basic needs for food. I can't imagine even the weakest person just sitting back. You can imagine the crowd on their feet, agitated and frightened that their needs will not be met. Think of the doctors waiting room and the receptionist announcing that the doctor is not going to be available for the rest of the day. The poor receptionist will be overwhelmed by people insisting that they have to be seen and soon. The complaining that will follow too! Jesus doesn't

pull some futuristic Harry Potter stunt with a magic wand. He looks at their immediate needs to be at peace in their situation. To sit down. When we are really struggling with something, isn't it hard to just sit down. The cupboard's that have been cleaned out in the early hours of the morning when sleep just won't come. The problem is so pressing and uncomfortable in our minds so we try to distract ourselves with endless tasks. Jesus commands us to sit down, rest and give it to Him. That's hard, but essential.

Do you know what a squint window is? In medieval times a window that was not much more than a slit was built into the wall near the church altar so that the lepers could watch the celebration of the Holy Communion taking place. The congregation were kept safe from the disease but what of those suffering from it? Just a squint at the Holy Communion and a place of healing, a place to connect closer to Jesus. Thankfully those windows and their purpose are no more. Just historic sad places. Places that remind us of our ignorance and how we might without realising it keep those who are more needy excluded from the presence of Christ. If the crowd was surging forward then the most vulnerable would possibly only have been able to squint at the presence of Christ. To have them all sit down makes it possible for everyone to see Christ. Have we ever thought how our stressing over our needs blocks out any compassion for others in need?

We need to sit down and take stock and hand everything over to Jesus.

What does Jesus do with the meagre offering given to him?

He Give thanks:

I remember having to ask for time off from college to go to a funeral and the college lecturer annoying me because he said he would rather go to a funeral than a wedding! At the time it felt incredibly insensitive and inappropriate. I'm glad I went back to him and asked him why he said that. His response was that at a funeral you look back and give thanks for a life and what that person has been. At a wedding the future is unknown. True, but still so hard to accept when a loved one dies. We grieve, in most situations, really for ourselves.

When we feel life has given us a miserable portion can we stop and give thanks? There is much speculation that the loaves Jesus was given were the bread of the poor. The fish tiny sprats. You can imagine the cynic's comments as Jesus gives thanks for them. Have you ever been invited to a meal and you salivate for days in expectation of the feast to come. The day and meal arrives and you offered what amounts to 'snacks!'. I certainly have been in those situations and with my companions looked for a way of escaping to make it hot foot to the nearest takeaway. Definitely not thankful to the host or enjoyed the experience. Looking back I wish I had been more grateful. As with the current trend of owning up, "my bad"! Hindsight is not a wonderful factor. It just reminds you that you chose the wrong reaction or response. How much better if even just symbolically we could sit back, take stock and give thanks for what is good even when everything else seems awful. Talking to someone recently whose husband quite suddenly, was taken seriously ill. They said almost without thinking, "thankfully someone was able to help us get to the hospital." I guess if we think past the negatives we can find ourselves remembering the good things that we are thankful for in the direst of situations. When we do that, as the old hymn says; we count our many blessings and it will surprise us what the Lord has done.

We will have an abundance of blessings to be thankful for and what are we to do with those blessings?

Share: we might feel we have so little to offer but put into the hands of God, miracles happen. I am reminded of the story of the person walking along the seashore and seeing an endless row of washed up starfish. They kept on bending down and casting them back into the sea. An onlooker remarked about how futile their efforts were. They would never be able to make a difference given the scale of the situation. The person responded by tossing another starfish into the sea and remarking, "made a difference to that one".

When we seek to put into God's hands what we have and what we need,

He will want us to share his blessings.

What a difference we could make.

STF 706

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your Church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Prayers of Intercession:

Let us pray for all those who long for some light to shine in their lives and bring relief to their troubled hearts. We pray for those known personally to us. Our friends and family. Neighbours and strangers who have made their needs known to us. We pray for ourselves, we long to be part of the church gathered today, but physically it's not possible. Meet with those in need today and let your light bring healing and hope. Peace and joy.

We pray for our troubled world. We think of the items that we have heard about in the news these past days. For those longing for warfare and violence to end. For those struggling with the aftermath of natural disasters. For those in our own locality who are struggling with violence and the inhuman treatment of others. Bring hope and peace into these dark places.

We pray for those who are hungry and thirsty. In too many places in the world people don't have the basic resources of clean running water, food to eat and shelter. In our own communities we know that the problems of the homeless are still present. Food banks are a necessity for many people to be able to cope. We thank you for all the agencies that try to bring relief to the needy. We pray for them and for those they serve.

In our longing for relief to the multitude of needy people in our world and communities, make us agents of your light. Help us to see how we can make a difference, no matter how small the offering. We thank you for our Circuit and churches and for the various ways so many people are involved in caring for our communities. Help us to continually seek to be your servant's in our needy world and bring light into dark times and places for all. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer.

STF 545

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and lone with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

The Blessing

Let the majesty of the Father be the light by which you live,
the compassion of the Son be the love by which you live,
the presence of the Spirit be the power by which you live.
And May the peace of God enfold us, the love of God uphold us
and the wisdom of God control us. **Amen.**

