

# 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Morning Service

## Jesus sharing bread

Martin Rider

### Call to Worship - Psalm 145:13-16

Your kingdom will go on and on, and you will rule for ever. The Lord will keep his promises; he is loyal to all he has made. The Lord helps those who have been defeated and takes care of those who are in trouble. All living things look to you for food, and you give it to them at the right time. You open your hand, and you satisfy all living things. Amen.

Our first hymn was written in 1993 by Bernadette Farrell, a gifted Roman Catholic hymn-writer, who was the first Deputy Director of Citizens UK and whose hymns span all denominations.

### StF 706 – Longing for light

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| 1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness,<br>Longing for truth, we turn to you.<br>Make us your own, your holy people,<br>Light for the world to see.                    | 3) Longing for food, many are hungry.<br>Longing for water, many still thirst.<br>Make us your bread, broken for others,<br>Shared until all are fed.        |
| Ch) <i>Christ, be our Light!</i><br><i>Shine in our hearts, Shine through the darkness.</i><br><i>Christ be our Light!</i><br><i>Shine in your Church gathered today.</i> | 4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.<br>Longing for warmth, many are cold.<br>Make us your building, sheltering others,<br>Walls made of living stone. |
| 2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.<br>Longing for hope, many despair.<br>Your word alone has power to save us.<br>Make us your living voice.                    | 5) Many the gifts, many the people,<br>Many the hearts that yearn to belong.<br>Let us be servants to one another,<br>Making your kingdom come.              |

Bernadette Farrell © 1993 Bernadette Farrell

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### Prayer of Adoration & Confession

Glorious God, Creator of the universe and Word of light and life, we come to worship you in joyful adoration, for you bless us with your love, despite our sinfulness. Throughout our history you have sought to draw us close to you, yet, when we rebelled against you and made ourselves your enemies. Instead of abandoning us as we deserved, you came to us as Jesus Christ, who not only taught us how we should live, but broke the power of sin and death at Calvary.

We offer praise and thanksgiving for all your blessings: for everything we enjoy; for opportunities and experiences that fulfil us; for challenges that test us and mould our characters, but most of all for loving us despite our failure to live as you call us to.

Merciful Lord, forgive us for not loving and serving you wholeheartedly, for our failure to love others as we would like to be loved, for the sins we have committed and the good we've neglected to do. Help us to amend our ways and to walk the path Christ Jesus has set before us.

Amazing God, you hear and answer our prayer, offering not only your pardon, but inviting us to follow you once more. May we do so in the power of the Holy Spirit, serving our neighbours and glorifying you in Jesus' lovely name. **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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 this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Our next hymn first appeared in 1978. Its author, Revd. John B. Foley belonged to the 'St Louis Jesuits', a group of Catholic composers who flourished in the 1970s and 80s and who wrote and performed, using guitars, in styles akin to folk music. They included Daniel Schutte, who wrote, 'I, the Lord of sea and sky'. This hymn is not in "Singing the Faith" and I learned it through Revd. Judith Breiner, an American intern, who served in the Stourbridge and Brierley Hill Circuit in the mid-1980s. It is number 620 in "The United Methodist Hymnal".

## Song – One bread, one body, one Lord of all

*Ch) One bread, one body, one Lord of all,  
One cup of blessing which we bless.  
And we, though many throughout the earth,  
We are one body in this one Lord*

2) Many the gifts,  
Many the works,  
One in the Lord of all.

1) Gentile or Jew,  
Servant or free,  
Woman or man, no more.

3) Grain for the fields,  
Scattered and grown,  
Gathered to one, for all.

*John B Foley © 1978 North American Liturgy Resources*

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## Prayers of Intercession

Amazing God, although we rejoice in this beautiful, wonderful planet on which we live and in your sustaining grace, we grieve at the suffering of our neighbours both nearby and further afield, more often than not as a result of mankind's failure to live as you call us to. We acknowledge that you have blessed us throughout our lives and so we ask you to help us to play our part, however small it may be, to heal some of the world's brokenness. Lord, whilst many situations are far beyond our power to remedy, we know they are not beyond yours.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Gracious God, hear our prayer for peace in countries which are suffering from war, persecution and terrorism. We pray that the leaders of the world will learn to walk the ways of peace and to negotiate and compromise instead of using force to gain their ends. May those who govern countries where people are persecuted for their beliefs, race or gender, turn and seek mercy and justice in all their dealings. As we think of victims of mankind's inhumanity to man, we pray that they will receive the support and courage they need to build new, better and secure futures.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Loving God, help us answer your call to serve you through the mission of our churches and organizations that serve the poor and vulnerable in our society. Remember the churches in our area and the World Church. Guide us through this pandemic and help us serve and support the poor and broken-hearted, here and abroad. Help us to find new ways, not only to preach Good News but to live it day by day and to be a light of hope in a gloomy, despairing world.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Loving Lord, encourage the Government and their advisors to adopt policies that will bring us safely through this pandemic whether or not they are popular or politically expedient. We continue to ask for a special blessing upon the NHS, scientists and keyworkers as they strive to heal us and to keep us safe throughout this crisis. Help them cope with the enormous demands that are being put upon them and protect them in their work. Hear our prayer for schools as they reopen tomorrow. Keep both staff and pupils safe.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Lord of healing and wellbeing, remember people who are suffering from sickness, grief or trouble, that they may find healing, renewed strength and peace, not only as a result of the care and support they receive, but by experiencing your presence in their time of need. In your mercy reach out to people who are living with a dementia, besides their friends, carers and families, who are seeking to support them in these difficult times. Remember in your compassion everybody who is facing furlough, unemployment, addictions, broken relationships, loneliness and especially bereavement at a time when we are already burdened with grief and uncertainty. Help us to be sensitive to the needs of our neighbours, so we can offer them friendship and practical support. In a time of silence, we pray for everyone we know who needs your help..... Loving Lord, enfold them all with the warmth of your love, so they experience the fullness of your comfort, hope and all-transcending peace.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Like Christ, the past year has been a wilderness in which we have been sorely tested. Grant us the spiritual food we need to follow our Saviour: wisdom, courage, steadfastness and compassion, in order to feed our neighbours with the living bread of the gospels and to proclaim your saving grace.

L: Merciful Lord      **R: Heal our brokenness**

Abba, Father God, bless us all and our friends and families. Keep us free from harm, help us to resist temptation to sin, so that the manner in which we live brings you honour and glory, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

### **Reading: Luke 9:12-17**

Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

## Sermon

Shalom chaverim! Brothers and sisters, may God's full blessing be yours today and always. You ask who I am? Let me tell you. I am Adam bar Jonas, or Andreas the fisherman to my Gentile customers, or simply Andrew, brother of Simon Peter and follower of Jesus the Christ. I want to tell you about one of the Master's miracles and its significance to followers like us.

When he heard of the killing of his kinsman, John the Baptiser, the Master sailed with us across the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida in the province of Gaulonitis, possibly to reflect upon John's death at the command of Herod Antipas, but also because Gaulonitis was under the jurisdiction of Tetrach Philip, who loathed Herod. The Master sought solitude in the surrounding hills, but his fame had spread around the towns of Galilee and, when people saw us set sail, they walked around the coast and arrived almost as soon as we landed. Although he was tired and troubled the Lord set aside his own wishes to teach and heal the large crowd until the late afternoon. James bar Zebedee spoke up and suggested that Jesus ought to send the crowd away, so they could go to the town to buy food before nightfall, but the Master astonished us by exclaiming, "They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat."

We looked at one another. The crowd was enormous, at least five thousand, possibly more. Simon Peter, ever the businessman, remarked to me, 'We'd need at least two hundred denarii – that's nearly six months' wages for one man!' The keeper of our purse, Judas Iscariot, blanched at the thought and shook his head in disbelief. I felt somebody tug my coat, looked round and saw a boy of eleven or twelve, who had clearly heard my brother. The boy solemnly handed me five small barley loaves and two fish – all he had brought for his supper, so, feeling hopeless, I handed them to the Master.

However, instead of rebuking me, the Master directed us to bid the multitude sit in groups of fifty. He broke and blessed the boy's offering and put the pieces into baskets from which we were to feed the crowd. I can't explain what happened next: if I could it wouldn't have been a miracle, but I know everybody ate enough to be satisfied and when we collected in the uneaten leftovers, they filled our twelve baskets. You ask me how? I'll tell you. I don't know! But I know some people have argued that members in the crowd had bought food with them, too, and were moved to share it by the boy's generosity. I'm not sure that's right, but even if was the case, it would have been a kind of miracle to transform such a crowd to spontaneously share all they had with their neighbours.

The feeding of five thousand reminded me of the Lord Almighty feeding our ancestors with quail and manna in the wilderness and of Elisha feeding a hundred men with only twenty loaves. I realised what we witnessed was a vision of the kingdom of heaven, for our Master was clearly more than a prophet, because he wasn't only concerned about filling people's stomachs; he fed their souls, too. For much of the day he'd healed and taught them, ignoring his own wishes for quiet time, ignoring the disturbing thought about the Baptizer's beheading. The Master showed his love is all-embracing and redemptive.

We disciples learned several things that day. Firstly, we cannot act in our own strength alone, but need to trust in the Lord which is why he later baptized us with the Holy Spirit and why the same Spirit works in us, if we will let him. Secondly, if we offer all we have and are, however small our offering may appear, the Master will bless it and multiply it many times over. Thirdly, our generosity is likely to provoke others into open-handed sharing and the current plague, this coronavirus, makes it all the more important to be generous.

Think of the area where we live. How many people are relying on food-banks to get by? How many children are relying on meals provided during school holidays? How can we help? What about those who are desperately lonely? Can we 'phone them, or reach them on Facebook? What of people who have lost loved-ones in this pandemic? Can we find ways to support them? What of the many in our community who are desperate, unemployed or depressed? What can we do as Church to help? Remember, the Lord sought to meet physical, mental and spiritual hunger. That is our mission, too. Like the boy with five loaves and two fish, the Lord will accept and bless whatever we can offer.

Finally, what of our brothers and sisters in the Developing World? We can certainly support All We Can and Christian Aid, but we can also lobby the Government to speed vaccines to these lands sooner rather than later, for until the world's poor are protected, we won't be secure. Chaverim, we are living in a time of great need, when what little we can offer will make a difference. Let us recall the Lord's generosity in this miracle and be moved to copy him in our discipleship. Shabbat shalom! Amen.

We close with hymn number 415, 'The Church of Christ, in every age' which was written in 1969 by Revd. Fred Pratt Green, entitled "the Caring Church".

### **StF 415 – The church of Christ**

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| 1) The Church of Christ, in every age,<br>Beset by change, but Spirit led,<br>Must claim and test its heritage<br>And keep on rising from the dead. | 4) For he alone, whose blood was shed,<br>Can cure the fever in our blood<br>And teach us how to share our bread<br>And feed the starving multitude. |
| 2) Across the world, across the street,<br>The victims of injustice cry<br>For shelter and for bread to eat,<br>And never live until they die.      | 5) We have no mission but to serve<br>In full obedience to our Lord:<br>To care for all, without reserve,<br>And spread his liberating Word.         |
| 3) Then let the servant Church arise,<br>A caring Church that longs to be<br>A partner in Christ's sacrifice,<br>And clothed in Christ's humanity.  |  |

*Fred Pratt Green © 1971 Stainer & Bell CCL No. 515642*

### **Benediction**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore. **Amen.**