

8th August 2021 – Morning Service

Jesus – Life's essential ingredient

Colin Russ

Call to Worship - Psalm 34 v 1 – 8

I will praise the Lord no matter what happens. I will constantly speak of his glories and grace. I will boast of all his kindness to me. Let all who are discouraged take heart. Let us praise the Lord together and exalt his name. For I cried to him and he answered me! He freed me from all my fears. Others too were radiant at what he did for them. Theirs was no downcast look of rejection! This poor man cried to the Lord—and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles. For the Angel of the Lord guards and rescues all who reverence him. Oh, put God to the test and see how kind he is! See for yourself the way his mercies shower down on all who trust in him.

Prayer

Almighty God and Father of all, source of everything that is beautiful, good and true. Majestic creator God, designer of the universe and the life of all that you in love have made. Compassionate and gracious God, who in your love for humankind revealed yourself to the world through the gift of your own precious son Jesus Christ who you gave to live among us and to sacrifice His life for the forgiveness of our sins and to make us one with you. Loving Father God, beyond our ability to imagine or understand, we come in Jesus' name to worship you. Holy God, as you reach down to meet us and touch us with your grace, help each one of us to look up and feel your holy presence embracing and enfolding us in a very real way. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, draw us to yourself and help us to find our healing, forgiveness and peace as we put our trust in Jesus the Christ and all He has achieved for us. Loving God in Christ, who are we that we dare come seeking your mercy and love, yet you welcome us always. Help us in this time of worship to experience your nearness, overwhelming and lifting us to a fresh experience of your great love and renewing us in our discipleship. Loving God we come to you in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our saviour and Lord. **Amen**

StF 18 – Be still and know that I am God

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|---|---|
| 1) Be still and know that I am God,
Be still and know that I am God,
Be still and know that I am God, | 3) In you, O Lord, do I put my trust,
In you, O Lord, do I put my trust,
In you, O Lord, do I put my trust, |
| 2) I am the Lord who saves and heals,
I am the Lord who saves and heals,
I am the Lord who saves and heals, | |

Anon CCL No. 515642

Reading: John 6:35, 41 – 51

Jesus replied, "I am the Bread of Life. No one coming to me will ever be hungry again. Those believing in me will never thirst. Then the Jews began to murmur against him because he claimed to be the Bread from heaven. "What?" they exclaimed. "Why, he is merely Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know. What is this he is saying, that he came down from heaven?"

But Jesus replied, "Don't murmur among yourselves about my saying that. For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me, and at the Last Day I will cause all such to rise again from the dead. As it is written in the Scriptures, 'They shall all be taught of God.' Those the Father speaks to, who learn the truth from him, will be attracted to me. (Not that anyone actually sees the Father, for only I have seen him.)

How earnestly I tell you this—anyone who believes in me already has eternal life! Yes, I am the Bread of Life! When your fathers in the wilderness ate bread from the skies, they all died. But the Bread from heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. I am that Living Bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone eating this Bread shall live forever; this Bread is my flesh given to redeem humanity.”

Reflection - Jesus the essential ingredient for living.

What has brought us to worship today? Is it what we usually do on a Sunday and something that we enjoy as we meet friends? This may be the case and there is nothing wrong if it is so. But there may be other deeper reasons such as a desire to try to honour God with our worship, to confess our failings, or a need to be renewed and refreshed as God meets us, touches us and leads us by His Spirit to understand what His word means for us today, this coming week. What is important for you, for me today?

In the gospel reading, Jesus says unequivocally that He and His teaching are the vital ingredient for life now and for life always. He is talking about a food which is more than that which satisfies the physical body. He is speaking of Himself as the bread of life, His body given to save humankind and restore each of us to a right relationship with God, Father and creator of all. What He gives is food, teaching, inspiration, encouragement, peace of mind and strength which lasts forever and continues to feed the deepest human needs day in, day out.

Jesus said ‘I am the bread for life which goes on feeding your spiritual needs for all time, sustaining indefinitely and leading to eternal life lived in me and my teaching through the power of the Holy Spirit’. And each time we share holy communion we reaffirm our trust in Christ the living bread as we remember His words ‘take, eat, this is my body given for you, drink from the cup that is poured out for you and is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me.’ Luke 22 v 19,20. The gospel reveals Jesus as the key ingredient for life at peace in God and for life in all its fullness promised to all those who put their trust in Him as saviour and lord.

StF 252 – Jesus the Lord said I am the bread

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|---|--|
| 1) Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Bread,
The Bread of Life for the world am I.
The Bread of Life for the world am I,
The Bread of Life for the world am I'.
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Bread,
The Bread of Life for the world am I.' | 4) Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Light,
The one true Light of the world am I'.
The one true Light of the world am I'.
The one true Light of the world am I'.
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Light,
The one true Light of the world am I' |
| 2) Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Vine,
The true and fruitful Vine am I'.
The true and fruitful Vine am I'.
The true and fruitful Vine am I'.
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Vine,
The true and fruitful Vine am I'. | 5) Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Life,
The Resurrection and the Life am I'.
The Resurrection and the Life am I'.
The Resurrection and the Life am I'.
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Life,
The Resurrection and the Life am I'. |
| 3) Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Way,
The true and living Way am I'.
The true and living Way am I'.
The true and living Way am I'.
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Way,
The true and living Way am I'. | |

Reading: Ephesians 4:20 – 5:2

But that isn't the way Christ taught you! If you have really heard his voice and learned from him the truths concerning himself, then throw off your old evil nature—the old you that was a partner in your evil ways—rotten through and through, full of lust and sham. Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better.

Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature. Stop lying to each other; tell the truth, for we are parts of each other and when we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves. If you are angry, don't sin by nursing your grudge. Don't let the sun go down with you still angry—get over it quickly; for when you are angry, you give a mighty foothold to the devil.

If anyone is stealing he must stop it and begin using those hands of his for honest work so he can give to others in need. Don't use bad language. Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing. Don't cause the Holy Spirit sorrow by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who marks you to be present on that day when salvation from sin will be complete. Stop being mean, bad-tempered, and angry. Quarrelling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ.

Follow God's example in everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father. Be full of love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself to God as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, for Christ's love for you was like sweet perfume to him.

Reflection - Jesus, agent for life change

When we look at Jesus sincerely, when we turn to Him and open our hearts to His word and teaching, what do we expect to happen? If we are serious about seeking Christ and His purpose for us, we have to expect and accept a new dynamic at work in our experience which constantly changes us, develops us and moves us forward. There isn't any point in seeking Christ's way for our lives unless we are ready and willing to move on with Him, break new ground.

We have recently bought a new car. The technology has moved so much from our old car which we had for eleven years. If we are not willing to embrace the new technology but just stick with what we have been used to, any benefit from the new car will be extremely limited and money wasted. Likewise seeking Jesus to impact our lives but being unwilling to update the enriching experiences He offers us is a wasted opportunity.

As Paul says in Ephesians 4 v 23/4 'Now your attitudes and thoughts must be constantly changing for the better. Yes, you must be a new and different person, holy and good. Clothe yourself with this new nature.' Then in 2 Cor. 5 v 17 Paul says 'If anyone is in Christ, she/he is a new creation, the old has gone and all is made new'. And this transformed way of life is what Paul sets out in the Ephesians passage.

So the benefit of meeting God in Christ in worship today can only be fully realised if we are willing to subordinate everything in our lives to the influence of the Holy Spirit. By becoming captive to the Spirit, we are set free to to enjoy the privilege of thriving and growing as God's children, as human beings and so enjoy the great things with which God wants to bless us.

Reflection - Jesus challenges us to let go and move on

It isn't easy to let go of the things in which we feel safe. It can be frightening when we do let go. But when we do and submit to the Holy Spirit, God's blessings are gloriously liberating. Matt 6 v33 Jesus says 'Strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the other things will be given to you as well'. Following Jesus and His teaching leads us into a demanding and exciting way of life as we witness God working among us and through us.

A few years ago we went with Margaret and David to the Blaenavon mining museum near Abergavenny. There was the opportunity to go down the mine and see the workings first hand. Unfortunately I had a terrible fear of being underground in enclosed spaces. On the Friday night Brian King asked me if I was going down the mine to which I said no. He encouraged me to change my mind saying he would accompany me but I declined.

On the day when the time came I found myself joining those going underground in the waiting room watching the introductory film, but still not wanting to go down the pit. Even when the group moved through to put on helmets and safety equipment I found myself following at the back but still telling myself I could back out. It's not too late. However an inner feeling caused me to carry on, to be kitted out with all the gear and ultimately to find myself in the cage with friends descending the 300ft. to the working area. And so against my instinct I went underground and had a real blessing as we toured the working site with our guide. I came back above ground elated, my phobia dispelled after a shared fellowship experience with friends in our church family. By the way, Brian, God bless him, never made it down the pit having taken a wrong turning on the way and arriving too late for the underground trip.

In this time and space today we can meet with God as certainly as we meet each other. As we look to Him in Christ He is reaching down to touch us with His love and to speak words of hope and encouragement to us. Think of what is happening now. Holy God meeting with you and me, unworthy and yet welcomed because of His amazing grace revealed in His son, our saviour. Jesus' message to us is 'Trust me, I am the living bread of life. I am the essential ingredient which will lift and transform your life and experience of me if only you will give way and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you'.

I don't quite know how I ended up going down the pit on that occasion but I do know I was wonderfully blessed because of the experience. In this blessed moment can you, can I let go of that which is holding us back and allow Holy God through His Spirit to lift us into the life experiences He has planned for us?

StF 397 – The Spirit lives to set us free

1)	The Spirit lives to set us free, Walk, walk in the light. He binds us all in unity, Walk, walk in the light.	3)	He died in pain on Calvary, Walk, walk in the light, To save the lost like you and me. Walk walk in the light.	5)	By Jesus' love our wounds are healed, Walk, walk in the light, The Father's kindness is revealed. Walk walk in the light.
Ch)	<i>Walk in the light, Walk in the light, Walk in the light, Walk in the light of the Lord.</i>	4)	We know His death was not the end, Walk, walk in the light, He gave His Spirit to be our friend. Walk, walk in the light.	6)	The Spirit lives in you and me, Walk, walk in the light, His light will shine for all to see. Walk, walk in the light.
2)	Jesus promised life to all, Walk, walk in the light. The dead were wakened by His call. Walk, walk in the light.				

Prayer

Gracious Father, you care for all you have made. Help us to know that you love us as individuals, that we are important to you and unique in your sight.

Loving God help each of us to know we are meeting with you today, to hear your voice speaking and to experience your love enfolding us and carrying us into your purpose for our lives.

Lord Jesus Christ, as we meet you in tears at Calvary, so may we rejoice with you at the glory and reality of your resurrection, and know that you made yourself sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

Loving God in Christ, we pray that you will renew us, strengthen our faith, and give us the courage to submit to your Spirit and to follow where you lead us.

Father God, loving saviour Jesus Christ, we offer our prayers –
for your world in need [*Silence*]

for your church here in this place [*Silence*]

for the community you call us to serve and each home and family [*Silence*]

Help us to be faithful and make us reliable in doing your will during the coming week as we bring our prayers and worship for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son, our Saviour. **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.**

StF 447 – Jesus be the centre

1) Jesus, be the Centre,
Be my Source, be my Light, Jesus.

2) Jesus, be the centre,
Be my hope, be my song, Jesus.

Ch) *Be the fire in my heart,
Be the wind in these sails;
Be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

3) Jesus, be my vision,
Be my path, be my guide, Jesus.

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Blessing

Loving God as we go from this place send us forth in the love of our Saviour, renewed by your Spirit and strengthened by your grace. So may we faithfully serve you in all you ask us to do this day and always, and may the peace and blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and for ever. **Amen.**