

Worship for 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Whether you are local to South Warwickshire or come from another part of the world, whether you are a regular worshipper or just trying it out, whether you have been a follower of Jesus for decades or are not really sure what you believe you are welcome to worship.

The service has been prepared and led by a number of people: Kate Tennyson and Tim Pearson have carried the administrative and technical work; Linda Coleman and Barbara Greenwood are the readers Jeongsook Kim has chosen the hymns Richard Wilde is the preacher Michael Sharman and Trevor Pethick, that's me, will lead the prayers
If any of you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Resource Centre at swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

⁸The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

⁹The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

Psalm 145:8-9 (New International Version)

Hymn: StF 83 – Praise my soul the King of heaven

- 1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!**
- 2. Praise him for his grave and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.**

- 3. Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.**
- 4. Angels in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!**

Prayer of adoration

Heavenly Father
Although we are physically scattered in our own homes

We come together in spirit to worship you.

You are the source of all things

Your love knows no bounds

Your patience has no limits.

You sent your Son, Jesus, to bear our burdens
He committed no sin, yet died for us on the cross
So that we might have a relationship with you.

Now your Spirit comforts and supports us,
Encourages and guides us
So that we may become the disciples you wish us to be.

We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen

Prayer of confession

Gracious and loving Father
Despite all the good gifts you provide us
Sometimes we stumble and fall.

We turn a blind eye when you call us to act
Hoping someone else will fulfil the task

We knowingly hurt and injure others
By our thoughts, words and deeds
Pretending to others it wasn't us.

Yet it is no use pretending to you
Because you know us better than we know
ourselves.

So we kneel before you humbly
And confess our sins.

[Silence]

Forgive us our sins and release us from that
which holds us back.

Declaration of forgiveness

Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners,
says

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn: StF 161: Speak, O Lord, as we come to you

- 1. Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.**
- 2. Teach us, Lord, full of obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.**
- 3. Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for
us.**

**Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Isaiah 55:1-5

(New International Version)

Invitation to the Thirsty

¹"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

²Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come
running to you,

because of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour."

Psalm Psalm 145:8-9; 14-21

(New International Version)

⁸The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

⁹The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

¹⁴The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper
time.
¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
¹⁷The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.
¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
¹⁹He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.
²⁰The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

Epistle Romans 9:1-5
(New International Version)

Paul's Anguish Over Israel

¹I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my
conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—
²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in
my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were
cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my
people, those of my own race, ⁴the people of
Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs
the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of
the law, the temple worship and the promises.
⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is
traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who
is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Gospel Matthew 14:13-21
(New International Version)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³When 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. ¹⁴When Jesus landed and saw a

large crowd, he had compassion on them and
healed their sick.

¹⁵As 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."

¹⁶Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away.
You give them something to eat."

¹⁷"We have here only five loaves of bread and
two fish," they answered.

¹⁸"Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹And 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.

²⁰They all ate and were satisfied, and the
disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken
pieces that were left over. ²¹The number of those
who ate was about five thousand men, besides
women and children.

Sermon

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

The feeding of the five thousand – or more. The
story that's found in all four of the Gospels, with
slight variations I admit, but for me personally,
and you can call me old fashioned if you like, I
think it adds authenticity to the story. I believe
it's real, I believe these events happened and I
think they were transformational in the
experience of Jesus's disciples who followed him.
They saw things that we wouldn't necessarily see
in our modern generation that linked right back.

We know more or less where it took place. Was
it Helena the mother of Constantine, the first
Christian emperor who discovered the place, I'm
not sure? But it was rediscovered in the
nineteenth century by archaeologists the site of
a fourth century church built near the edge of

the lake of Galilee. It's a powerful place to stand and feel that you are in that place where these events took place; especially if you are going to share food and drink while you're there. The church was built more recent times a modern church, but right on that site, carefully preserving the mosaics that go back some sixteen hundred years - famous mosaics of the baskets the loaves and the fish.

Of course, nowadays the water has receded a bit, the scenery changes but the principles within that story are unchanging and what they teach us about God and our responsibilities in our own generation – it's called the church of the multiplication. I don't like that title very much, I think it sounds more like saint Pythagoras than it does about our saints. Rather the church of the loaves and the fishes – the bread and the followers.

It's a consistent story, linking back through as Matthew, in particular, sees Jesus as the new Moses providing for his followers. Not in the desert, but certainly in a time of need. Though of course, there are differences between Old testament stories and Jesus. But there's consistency – you'll find Elijah and you'll find there a miracle feeding story, and Elisha and a provision for the widow or we think of David who took the bread of the presence when he needed to break the rules of the religion of the day and provide for his people. But the big difference is this – whereas Moses would provide manna in the desert coming down from above from nowhere, Jesus involved others in making this possible. He was brought some provisions which then he shared with everyone, multiplying rather than creating out of nothing, transforming something that was there to make it meet the needs of so many others. And a simple lesson is there for us, and it's meant to be there I believe, all these many years later – for often we think our contribution is so small it's not worth giving. We look at the size of the

problems around the world today. Is my contribution to TearFund, or Christian Aid or whatever, is it worth giving? Of course it is, for in the hand of the lord, everything we honestly and generously give is multiplied and added to that others give too. We can, we must, make a difference in our generation.

But primarily, this is a compassion story. This is not like Moses going with Aaron to Pharaoh, performing miracles to gain and impress. This is a story of compassion. Jesus took pity on the crowds, the disciples, too, were concerned – it was towards the end of the day – they were hungry and weary. This is Jesus meeting a human need. The Bible reminds us again and again, that we need to care for each other wholly: in body, mind and spirit. Evangelism, sharing the good news of Jesus, must include all three aspects. Sometimes when I listen to Christian writers, I feel they're only focussing on what you might call Christian Socialism – taking pity on the world and transforming our systems, but neglecting to mention the essential need of the spiritual, nurturing our souls, nurturing our spirits, and informing our minds – challenging, stretching, educating. God cares about us in body, mind and spirit, as Jesus' model demonstrated, teaching how to come close to God spiritually, how to pray and engage with our lord himself, but also the very practical needs that should be shared and supported in human need.

It's also, I'm going to call it a communion story. It's actually a story which is meant to have links to the Lord's supper that we share in our own generation. Sharing food together has always been a very powerful thing to do, and I've got my mind full of many, many vivid occasions where food's shared – you just see something of the affection and the love. Whether it be as simple as a farmer I knew as we sat down to have our lunch together, would break the corner of his sandwich and give it to his dog, and the dog

looked up adoringly at his master. Now I know it's a simple reaction, but it's something that's laying deep beneath it – the desire to share with someone else when you've got something good yourself. We must do that in our telling of the good news story. But it's also about shared meals. I guess you, like me, have missed the chance to sit down and share meals these last umpteen weeks and now, thank goodness with the slight easing of lockdown, we can at last. There was an oxymoron, sharing with close family, a distance meal. It sounds a contradiction, and it is a bit, but sharing food together has always been part of our faith story, and we can learn from others – I remember going to a Sikh temple and being impressed with how many hundreds of folks they've provided meals for every time the congregation gathers for worship – they challenge us to go a bit beyond tea and biscuits when we share fellowship meals in the life of our churches once more.

But there is within it, too, a modelling of the communion and Matthew would have seen that and understood it as we know John did too, if you look at the teaching that follows on in John's gospel. And the way Matthew tells the story, you can see some very obvious parallels, words used in both contexts. We know for example, the feeding of the five thousand and the Lord's supper were in the evening; the people who were there were seated or reclined, he took the loaf - the bread; he blessed it, - gave thanks for it; he broke it and he gave it to them and there was enough for all. It was and should always be, a very inclusive meal. Although, I'm not personally a great sacramentalist, you might say, I've also missed not having the bread and the wine regularly – these signs of a meal that link us back to that great meal and to that special moment with the closest disciples of Jesus at the crucial moment before his passion, his death and resurrection.

As we begin to return to some new form of normality, it won't be too long before we can, once more, share together as congregations, in the sacrament of our Lord's supper. But it reminds us as we go forward, as one thing we have learned through this crisis, is how important it is to include those who can't be together. Please, if you're one of those who will never have sufficient mobility to join a congregation, for the bread and the wine of the Lord's supper with a congregation there; please ask if someone will bring you extended communion or might come and share communion with you in your home. There's nothing more discouraging and disappointing for a minister to discover that someone really would have liked a home communion but didn't ask, because, 'well, I know you're very busy'. Every person matters and we want to include all within the ministry of our church and that includes you, those who you love, and those who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus, and share the delight of a meal offered for all – the bread of life himself.

Let us pray:

Father God, we thank you for the sacraments which have given meaning and direction to the church over the years. For the many shared meals that we can look back on, and we ask that we will once more be able to gather again, but in the meantime, Lord, spare us from forgetting the things that really matter and help us always to be a truly inclusive church. In Jesus name we pray
Amen

Hymn: StF 531 – What a friend we have in Jesus

- 1. What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,**

**all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!**

- 2. Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness:
take it to the Lord in prayer.**
- 3. Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge –
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.**

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Thank you Lord God that you sustain us – you give us food to eat and water to drink

But not just that – you give us so much more – we live in a rich and vibrant world where we get to enjoy a vast array of foods and drinks from all around the world – fresh vegetables all year round – a host of cooking styles – we are truly blessed.

We thank you for your life giving word – your nourishing and refreshing word which speaks into our lives and lifts us up. We thank you that you love us and you want us to live life in all its fullness.

For your many covenants with us – promises that you will always be with us through the bad times as well as the good.

We give thanks for this opportunity to meet together once more to praise you, and although none of could have imagined a year ago that this

is how we would be worshipping, we know that time is in your hands and you are the God who is in control – we know that you hear our prayers, we know that you are with us and we just want to say thank you that you are our great God – you are our creator and our friend.

Hymn 4

StF 706 – Longing for light we wait in darkness

- 1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Long 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.*
- 2. 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.**

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 3. Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.**

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.**

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.

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

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.

Prayers of intercession

Prayers of intercession

And now as we come to our prayers of intercession we take time to be silent as we reflect back on the week that has passed. For those who we have seen, and for those we have not seen. For the things we have done and the things we have not done.

(Silence)

We lift up each and every one of the churches and chapels in South Warwickshire Circuit: Bidford, Cubbington, Dale Street, Fenny Compton, Henley, Kenilworth, Kineton, Mickleton, Radford Road LEP, Stockton LEP, Stratford on Avon, Tysoe, Warwick, Welford, Wellesbourne, Whitnash and the congregation of Knightcote.

We pray for the worshipping people of those churches and chapels, for the community members who would normally be using their buildings, for the lay and ordained staff, for the residents of the towns and villages those churches and chapels serve.

We pray for your life giving water – your eternal love and faithfulness to those people and places.

We pray for our wider our church family, for our Birmingham District stretching out into Worcestershire, parts of Herefordshire and the Birmingham conurbation. We pray for our church families living and working in areas of deprivation – feeding the hungry, sharing peace in troubled communities.

We pray for your life giving water – your eternal love and faithfulness to those people and places.

We pray for the people of Oxford preparing to receive Peter Powers and all that he is set to bring them. We pray for the people of Hull Centre and West Circuit, especially the congregations of North Ferriby Methodist Church, Hull Central Methodist Church, Askew Avenue Methodist Church and Willerby Methodist Church, saying goodbye to Iain Ballard as he prepares to come and take up his new role here in south Warwickshire. We pray for all churches and ministers who are seeing change at this difficult time – we pray that you will watch over and guide those involved in this process.

We pray for your life giving water – your eternal love and faithfulness to those people and places.

We think now about your church and people all around the world, we give thanks for your vibrant, growing Methodist churches in Africa and pray that your Holy Spirit will spur them on to further show us the joy of knowing you. But we pray also for your protection on nations who are less well equipped to deal with Covid 19 than we are. We pray that lives will not be lost. We especially pray that in this world changing year, world leaders will wake up to the need to bring jubilee to indebted nations – to cancel debts and to give people a fresh start

We pray for your life giving water – your eternal love and faithfulness to those people and places.

The Lord's Prayer

We say the Lord's prayer:

**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 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 forever
Amen**

The Offering & prayer

Many of us make our gifts and offerings through standing orders, through charitable gifts that we make, through giving our time and our availability, our care and our compassion. We offer all that we give as part of this worship today.

Generous giver of gifts – take all we give and grow your fruit in and through us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 690 – The Church's one foundation

- 1. The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the word;
from heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.**
- 2. Called out from every nation,
yet one through all the earth,
her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;**

**one holy name she blesses,
and shares one holy food,
as to one hope she presses
with every grace endued.**

- 3. In toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blest,
at last the Church victorious
shall be the Church at rest.**
- 4. Yet she on earth has union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
with them, the meek and lowly,
in heaven your face shall see.**

Prayer & blessing

And now, having met with Jesus, the Bread of Life, in worship and together on paper and online; it's time to give thanks to all involved all in preparing and presenting this act of worship. Now seeking God's blessing as we enter this new week; we say:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all always. AMEN