

CHRISTCHURCH WOODLEY 1st August 2021 10.30 am

Holy Communion

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
no words can express the wonder of your love,
the extent of your goodness,
the magnitude of your grace or the breadth of your saving purpose in Christ.

We thank you that the cross of Jesus on this table says it all,
speaking so simply, yet so eloquently,
of how much you care for us,
how much you have done for us, and how much you will yet do.

So we come, to receive from your hands,
and to give you our joyful worship in return,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn StF 340 Ye servants of God your master proclaim <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIkufB03P5I>

- 1 Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
and publish abroad his wonderful name ;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol ;
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.
- 2 God ruleth on high, almighty to save ;
and still he is nigh, his presence we have ;
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.
- 3 'Salvation to God who sits on the throne !'
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son ;
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.
- 4 Then let us adore, and give him his right ;
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honour and blessing, with angels above,
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayers [by Peter Sheasby, modified]

God, Creator of all the universe,
we thank you for all that you have made:
for land and sea, air, fire and light;
all make the universe what it is,
designed and ordered by your wisdom.

We search its mysteries,
rejoice in its beauty, revel in its joys,
and struggle to understand when it causes suffering.
But without you we would not exist and life would be nothing.

God, divine Son Jesus,
we thank you for all you have done:
for your saving work on the cross,
your resurrection and ascension,

your mediation of our needs,
your selfless love and obedience.

We study your words,
admire your deeds, follow your example,
knowing we can never reach your perfection.
But without you we would be condemned and life would be nothing.

God, Holy Spirit,
we thank you for being with us, in us:
we depend on your guidance, rely on your inspiration,
seek your gifts, and try to show your fruits.
But without you we would be empty and life would be nothing.

Give us good things, generous God,
so that we can truly live Christian lives
and share you with our neighbours. Amen

All Age Address

Junior Church Hymn: StF 476 One more step along the world I go

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leAFwKfLFXc>

One more step along the world I go,
One more step along the world I go;
From the old things to the new,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn;
All the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me.
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling the way I should.
Where I see no way to go,
You'll be telling me the way, I know.
And it's from the old I travel to the new;

Reading: Exodus 16: 2-4, 9-20, 31

² In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

Keep me travelling along with you.
Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough;
Leap and sing in all I do,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

You are older than the world can be,
You are younger than the life in me;
Ever old and ever new,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

Sydney Carter (1915–2004)

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹² “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’”

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.’”

¹⁷ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. ¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

¹⁹ Then Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it until morning.”

²⁰ However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

³¹ The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

Reading: John 6: 22-35 *Jesus the Bread of Life*

²² The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. ²³ Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

³⁰ So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

³² Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty

Sermon

I'm sure you've heard many anecdotes about modern people's ignorance of the sources of the food they eat. Many struggle to think beyond the supermarket carton of milk to the cow; beyond the vacuum-packed rashers of bacon to the pigs; beyond the eggs in the carton to the hens, often kept in cages pecking at each other, rather

than free to peck and rootle in the open ground as nature intended. And even when people try to grow their own they sometimes misunderstand the plants in their care: a popular TV presenter recently became a laughing stock when she revealed that although her corn on the cob plants seemed to be growing well, when she pulled them up she was disappointed that there were no corn cobs growing underneath. Her co-presenter found it hard to stifle his laughter as he explained that the cobs grew at the top of the plant, not among the roots like potatoes! And then of course there is the famous BBC April Fool spoof film about spaghetti trees!

Just as many people today are unaware or unmindful of the true source of their physical food, so even more are unaware of the heavenly source of many of the 'good things' of life. An attitude of thankfulness used to be expressed in the Grace said at meals, thanksgiving services for safe harvests, thanksgiving services for deliverance from many of life's ills. Nowadays, although there may well be thanksgiving services planned when the Covid pandemic is finally deemed to be over, I doubt that as many people will turn out for them as turned out weekly for the national round of applause for NHS and other key workers.

This morning's gospel reading from John highlights the lack of understanding of those who had actually participated in the feeding of the five thousand miracle. Many seemed to have stayed on the spot into the early hours of the morning – no need to hurry away now their bellies were full! Maybe they were half-hoping for another free meal the next day, or to see yet another amazing feat performed by Jesus. Actually they missed it in the dark, as he walked on the water out to his disciples' boat! Eventually they realized that Jesus and his disciples had all gone, and so they went looking for them on the other shore of the lake.

Being pursued yet again by crowds, someone less discerning than Jesus, his disciples for example, might have assumed that those who came searching were doing so in response to the deep spiritual experience of receiving the bread and fish the previous day. 'Look how many have been converted to faith in Jesus as Messiah and heaven-appointed king! God's kingdom is on the brink of being fully realized!" they might have been secretly thinking.

But Jesus knew better. Most of those who had received the broken bread and fish yesterday didn't realize the full meaning of Jesus' (and God's) miraculous provision for them. Most of them didn't see it as an irrefutable sign of God's glory, so much as an indication that following Jesus could give them more of what they wanted. The 'what's in it for me' culture is not a modern development: it stems from our human sinfulness, going right back to the beginning of the human story.

Of course, Jesus himself points them away from seeking only temporary physical benefits, towards seeking the eternal blessings which God will pour out through him. So now they realize it's not going to be handed to them on a plate, and ask, 'What must we do for God to give us what we desire?' Most of those present had been brought up to believe that salvation came through birthright and through careful observance of the Law and Temple sacrificial ritual. So it's natural for them to assume that there are other practices or regulations that Jesus can prescribe that will bring them finally to their desired goal.

But Jesus says it's not about doing, it's about believing in him - much harder and far less easy to measure. In modern culture, when we talk about believing we tend to mean subscribing to a list of ideas or statements (such as the creeds) and acting in accordance with them, which is not dissimilar to the Jews' approach to the Law, the will of God for their lives, as revealed to Moses. But for Jesus, belief is a relationship with him: a relationship of trust and acceptance of his authority as God's Messiah (and Son).

In response to his words here the people make it clear how little they had understood yesterday's feeding miracle. Even though they had been part of the event and the recipients of the bread and fish, before they will believe, they still require Jesus to prove to them who he is by some miraculous sign. As far as they can see it, the onus is not on them to have faith, but on Jesus to convince them! They need evidence that he is greater than Moses, through whom God provided food for them in the wilderness after they left Egypt. If the feeding miracle of the day before was not sufficient to convince them, one has to wonder what further evidence they could possibly be given that would be enough to bring them to belief!

Unfortunately for them, the proof is in Jesus' person, his authority from God and his obedience to God's plan for salvation.

And what of us today? The early Church lived as a new community united in Christ, as its head. The evidence that Jesus' authority did indeed come from God, lay in the fruits of their faith, expressed in the life of the community: a way of life seeking harmony, unity, love and faithfulness. The essence of all activity in those early Christian communities was

- a) to utilize each other's God-given gifts in order to build up, encourage and equip the whole church body.
- b) And thus enabled, to reach out beyond the community of believers to draw others in. They did this by spreading the gospel message (some through preaching) and by their living example.

How well is our church community characterized by these two guiding principles?

Let us each consider truthfully and prayerfully

- How good an advert am I for faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?
- What are my gifts and how am I using them in the Lord's service?
- What are the gifts of others within this worshipping community, and how am I encouraging and building them up?

Prayers of Intercession

Most loving Lord,

by your cross and resurrection you have overcome the world.

We pray this morning for all who lie in the shadow of the cross.

Give healing to every broken life.....

Give release to those consumed by bitterness.....

Give light to those who sit in darkness.

Give peace to the tormented.....

Give joy to those in despair.....

Give relief to all in pain.....

Give hope to the dying.....

Give faith to the searching.....

Amen

Hymn: StF 287 When I survey the wondrous cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyHkkmL-KWo>

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 When I survey the wondrous cross,
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.</p> <p>2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ my God ;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.</p> <p>3 See from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down ;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown ?</p> | <p>4 His dying crimson, like a robe,
spreads o'er his body on the tree ;
then am I dead to all the globe,
and all the globe is dead to me.</p> <p>5 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small ;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.</p> |
|---|--|

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Communion Liturgy

Searching for meaning, hungry for truth,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Dismayed at our weakness, frustrated by failure,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Burdened by shame, crushed by guilt,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Bemused by questions, troubled by doubts,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Longing for peace, craving fulfilment,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Requesting refreshment, seeking renewal,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Yearning to follow, eager to serve,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Embraced by love, enveloped by grace,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Offering our worship, bringing our lives,
we meet you here, Lord, in bread and wine.

Gladly, we praise you.

Receive, Lord, our heartfelt worship.

Amen

Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, we look at you, we look at us,
and the gulf is so wide, the difference is so vast.

We turn aside in shame.

Have mercy.

We reflect on our words, we reflect on our deeds,
and they seem poles apart, so little in us speaking of you.

We turn aside in shame.

Have mercy.

We think of your love, we think of our selfishness,
and the contrast is so stark, the discrepancy so plain.

We turn aside in shame.

Have mercy.

We acknowledge your truth, we acknowledge our falseness,
and the two seem completely opposed, no way the gap can be bridged.

We turn aside in shame.

Have mercy.

We consider your grace, we consider our sinfulness,
the one so awesome, the other so awful.

We turn aside in shame.

Have mercy.

We eat bread, we drink wine
and the chasm is spanned, the divide at an end.

We turn aside in wonder.

For you have shown mercy, beyond our deserving.

Receive our joyful worship and grateful praise, offered in Jesus' name.

Amen

Words of Institution

Taking some bread, and thanking God for it,

Jesus broke it into pieces and distributed it among them, saying,

"This is my body, given for you; do this to remember me."

Similarly, taking a cup after supper, he said,

"This cup, poured out for you

represents the new covenant, sealed by my blood." [Luke 22:19-20]

Consecration & invitation

Lord Jesus Christ, we share in this meal

not in wistful nostalgia or sombre remembrance

but joyfully reminding ourselves of the enormity of your love

and the awesome sacrifice you made on our behalf.

We take bread and drink wine

so that we might never forget all you have done,

your faithfulness instead staying fresh in our minds,

colouring each moment of every day.

Amen

The bread and wine are consumed

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 us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and for ever.

Amen.

Hymn: StF 504 May the mind of Christ my Saviour <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7nmPUNdfkM>

- 1 May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.
- 2 May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.
- 3 May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.
- 4 May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea ;
him exalting, self forgetting —
this is victory.
- 5 May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859–1928)

Blessing

May the Lord who feeds us so faithfully,
blesses us so richly, leads us so surely,
forgives us so freely, supports us so staunchly
and loves us so completely,
go with us now and always.

Amen