

Teddington Circuit Worship at Home Sheets

Sunday 2nd August 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to the David Innes, Nick White and the Connexional team.

Opening Prayer

Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm;
still me, Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all the tumult within me cease;
enfold me, Lord in your peace.

David Adam (1936-2020)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith - number 624

Hymn: Help us O Lord to Learn (Singing the Faith 501)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/Lb5-ORex6uM>

Help us, O Lord, to learn
the truths your word imparts,
to study that your laws may be
inscribed upon our hearts.

Help us, O Lord, to live
the faith which we proclaim,
that all our thoughts and words and deeds
may glorify your name.

Help us, O Lord, to teach
the beauty of your ways,
that all who seek may find the Christ,
and make a life of praise.

William Watkins Reid (b. 1923)

Prayer:

God of our going out and our coming home, I worship you today.

For the times and places that have filled me with joy, I praise you.

Where I have chosen the wrong path and caused pain to myself, to you and to others, I ask your forgiveness.

For the assurance that you will walk beside me to forgive me and restore me, I thank you.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1-2

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Time to Reflect

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the miracles which appears in all four gospels, but there is an interesting difference between the accounts in the

three synoptic gospels, and the account in the gospel of John which gives an additional dimension to the message of the event. In the synoptic gospels, the disciples tell Jesus that they've got five loaves and two small fish, and Jesus tells them to distribute them to the crowd (which is actually 5000 men, with the women and children not included in the count). We're told that there were women and children there, and in the gospel of John, it's a little boy who produces the five loaves and two fish. He is unlikely to have been on his own - we would imagine he belongs to a sizeable family group, if they are going to get through 5 loaves between them.

The Old Testament lectionary reading seems to be almost a scene setter for the actual miracle. The prophet encourages people who are hungry and thirsty and have no money to eat and drink. It is rather like the disciples saying to Jesus, "We haven't got enough money to buy food and drink for this lot!" The prophecy and the miracle are illustrations - one in words, and one in action - for the generosity of God who meets our deepest needs.

And the context of the miracle provides three characteristics of God, as lived out by Jesus.

But before we look at these characteristics, we need to remind ourselves of the setting for the event. John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin and close associate, had just been beheaded by Herod. Jesus must have been deeply upset by these events, and also conscious that His own life was constantly at risk, and would ultimately be sacrificed too. He decided he wanted to spend some time alone, to reflect and pray, and hence He withdrew in a boat across Lake Galilee to the other side for some solitude, and to recharge His batteries.

But His whereabouts were tracked. Galilee was a small and very crowded area of around 200 towns with hundreds of thousands of people. News travelled fast and soon Jesus was disturbed from His privacy by crowds seeking healing. He abandoned His retreat and immediately turned to healing the sick around Him. His disciples came to rescue Him from the attention, but Jesus refused. Instead, He told them to feed the crowd, and the rest is history.

Whatever happened next would become a famous event remembered even as an expression of speech, when one is faced with a seemingly impossible challenge. We cry out, "you're asking me to feed the 5000 here", to emphasise the impossibility of the task.

What can we learn from this miracle?

Firstly, Jesus is showing that we should never allow our own priorities to get in the way of showing love to others. Often, we may be interrupted when in the middle of a task and we react impatiently: "Can't you see I'm busy" without even considering if the request might have greater importance or priority. Jesus had compassion on the crowd seeking healing.

Although He was no doubt tired as well as grieving for His friend, He recognised the needs of the crowd and He gave them priority. Perhaps we might reflect if there are occasions in our lives when we're tempted to put our own interests before those of others, without even giving the alternative serious thought? The miracle prompts us to check our priorities.

Secondly, Jesus showed that in order to meet the needs of others for food, He would call upon the help of others. He asked His disciples to distribute the food, and of course, the little boy's lunch played a big part in John's account. During our current health crisis, when many people are struggling to make ends meet, the many food banks which are operating across the country, often run by churches, are a modern-day example of feeding the 5000.

Whether the food is donated by supermarkets from left over stock, or by folk offering food of their own, or food bought for the purpose, a miracle occurs where food meets the need.

God uses the hands and feet of ordinary folk like you and me and the disciples and the little boy to perform miracles even today. The miracle prompts us to get involved actively.

Thirdly, Jesus was aware that there were leftovers, which weren't wasted. The disciples collected twelve basketfuls of broken pieces at the end and Jesus checked with them later that they had retrieved them. An example of the "waste not, want not" adage. That is how some of the food at food banks is sourced. There is no shame in using leftovers. Indeed, the waste of food in the developed world, which some estimate at as much as a third, is a tragedy of modern civilisation. The whole movement of recycling waste,

and the second hand clothes sales in charity shops and for school uniforms, are examples of how using the world's resources can be more efficient. The miracle prompts us to be good stewards.

Making sure we give our time to others as a priority, being actively engaged in ministry for Jesus and ensuring that we make best use of what God has given us, are just three ways in which this well-known miracle can remind us of how God would like us to live for Him.

The current crisis has stopped the world in its tracks. It has caused many to reconsider what really matters. It has caused Governments to be more aware of the needs of the weakest in society. It's caused us all to look out for those who are most at risk and most disadvantaged. It has caused us to communicate more with the lonely and housebound.

And it has reminded us of how often we take for granted the blessings of this life without a second thought. As the old hymn puts it, "All good gifts around us are sent from Heaven above, then thank the Lord O thank the Lord for all His love". Let's be grateful for what we have, and let's strive to ensure that the blessings we have are shared with others too.

Take a time to sit quietly

Hymn STF 58 What a faithful God -
www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuljQ3ueaxk

A time of prayer

Ever-present God, I join my prayer with all those who pray in the name of Jesus today:

We pray for your church that you grant us patience as we continue to the work we need to do to prepare for future gatherings together. We pray today especially for Hanworth and the work of the bereavement café.

We pray for those in Morocco, for those affected by Covid, for the church that faces persecution.

For those who are anxious about the future and those who see only threat in the days to come.

For those who are estranged from loved ones and feel they are unable to do anything to bring about reconciliation.

For those who wrestle in the night with trouble and distress of body, mind and soul.

I pray especially for ...

Holy God,
help us to show others that you are present in the midst
of their struggles, that together we might demonstrate
your great love and concern for your world.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Oh My Soul – Casting Crowns -

<https://youtu.be/3Dli0DRq6ww>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

Power of God, be our protection;
wisdom of God, be our guide;
word of God, be our inspiration;
shield of God, be our defence;
hosts of God, be our deliverance;
Son of God be our salvation;
now and always. Amen

St Patrick's Breastplate, Book of Armagh (9th Century)

Original Materials by Rev.d Dalwyn R Attwell
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