

**Mears Ashby and Hardwick  
and Sywell with Overstone**



**Prayers and Reflections  
for use at home**

**Sunday 2 August 2020**

**Trinity 8**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Our reading today is the well-known story of the feeding of the five thousand. All Jesus needs is five loaves and two fishes to provide an earthly banquet, a hillside picnic. If you do the maths, this is 1/1000<sup>th</sup> of a loaf for each person - a crumb, which becomes a satisfying meal. Just as in our Communion services, when Jesus feeds us and fills us with only a wafer or a piece of bread. This one small sign is enough for us to experience God's generous love, and his gracious forgiveness. During the lockdown, we have come to realise and recognise that he meets us and feeds us in other ways too. Fasting from Communion has not left us bereft of his loving provision.

Unlike Oliver Twist who asked for more, in Charles Dicken's famous novel, we only have to experience a little of God's generosity to feel full to bursting, satisfied and delighted with his blessing. God is amazing!

As you journey through these prayers and reflections, may you feel close to God and be fed by his generous and abundant love.

God bless,

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**Prayers and Reflections**  
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**God's Generosity**

**PREPARING OURSELVES**

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love.*

*If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love, here, in your room. You may also wish to have a cross in your palm, or on the table, and a bowl of water ready for the time of confession.*

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,  
I place my hopes and dreams,  
my fears and concerns,  
into your safe and loving hands.  
Pour your love into me,  
and fill me with your peace;  
in Jesus' name,  
I pray. **Amen.**

**LETTING GO**

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, or burdens you're struggling to carry, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of this well-known hymn.*

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways!  
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence praise,  
in deeper reverence praise.

*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.*



*Feel God's forgiveness. You are his beloved child, nothing will stop him loving you or suppress his deep desire for you to love him too. Give thanks for his generous love and caring provision.*

## **PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER** **(The Collect)**

*Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father.*

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,  
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern  
both our hearts and bodies  
in the ways of your laws  
and the works of your commandments;  
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,  
we may be preserved in body and soul;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*Our prayer is one of the Church of England's word rich collects. Yet - it is also a simple request. Through it, we offer our lives to God and invite him to come and guide our daily living, so that we may travel safely with him. It reminds me of the well-known Welsh hymn with its image of God leading his people through the wilderness.*

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy pow'ful hand:  
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and ever more, feed me now and ever more.

*We are living through some very tough and challenging times, and so it is good to remember that God is with us. He provides for our needs. It is both a perfect introduction to our Gospel reading of the feeding of the five thousand and an invitation to recall the times when God has been our source of strength in times of weakness. Pause to contemplate - When has God held you safe? Give thanks.*

# LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

## Feeding of the Five Thousand

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. *Matthew 14:13-21*

## Setting the scene

*Our reading begins with Jesus having just heard a shocking piece of news. John the Baptist, his herald and his cousin, is dead - executed by Herod. Jesus needs some time away to process his two-fold grief: the death of someone he's known all his life and loves, and the death of God's prophet. He gets into a boat in the hope of finding some space to be alone with his Father, to open his heart to him and seek his wisdom and guidance. John's death feels like a turning point for Jesus. The next stage of God's plan - Jesus' mission - is about to begin. He needs to go and abide in his Father's love, discern his will and accept it, before journeying on - refreshed. And yet - sadly for Jesus - this was not to be. Selflessly, he put the needs of others before his own, just as he did for us on the cross.*



Do what Jesus was unable to do on this occasion, pause and offer what is on your heart to God in the stillness and the silence.



## A Hymn of Still Abiding

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity,  
interpreted by love!  
Interpreted by love!



J G Whittier (1807-1892)

## Accepting God's Abundance

*When Jesus arrives at the other side of the lake, the crowds are there waiting for him, desperate for him. Even though he is filled with sadness, and an aching desire for his Father's love, he does not brush them away. He is so overcome with compassion that he generously gives of his time, and of his very self. As evening falls, the disciples are tired and hungry, and encourage Jesus to send the crowds away. Their remaining supplies - five loaves and two fishes - are not enough to feed the thirteen of them, let alone the five thousand or so on the surrounding hillside.*

*Jesus asks them to give what little they have and place it into his hands, and to trust in God's generosity to provide what is needed to fill the gap. They do. And, God does. With abundance. Before there was only enough for a crumb for each person, now everyone has had their fill and still there are twelve baskets of food left over for the journey home: a basket for each disciple. What generosity is this! He's fed them to overflowing.*

*Sometimes, God invites us to do something that feels beyond us - too difficult or demanding, too painful or self-giving - and we hold back believing that it is impossible. It's too much. We don't have what it takes. And yet - maybe, this is why God is calling us to give of ourselves.*

*Moses is a good example of someone who feels out of his depth when God calls him. When God invites him to lead his people out of slavery, Moses counters with excuse after excuse as to "why he can't". And yet - Moses does go on to lead his people out of Egypt, through the wilderness to the very edge of the Promised Land. How was it possible? Well...*

*Moses had to give what he had to God to use, and God chose him for this important mission knowing that he would have to plug his gaps, and he did with generous abundance through the forty years in the wilderness. God did not desert him even when Moses hit problems.*

*If we give of what we have, knowing that it is not enough, and lay this into God's hands for him to provide the rest and more, amazing things can and do happen to us and through us. We simply need to learn to trust in God's generosity and his steadfast love for us. In return, we will receive abundance of life.*

*I wonder how have you experienced God's generous provision during the Covid-19 crisis or - perhaps - at other times in your life? Give thanks.*

### **A Prayer of Response**

Heavenly Father, you are generous to me,  
giving more than I deserve.

You are accepting of my limitations,  
and my weaknesses, more than I realise.

You love me for who I am,  
and call me to be a part of your Church,  
a member of your family.

For all this and more -

I thank you. You have given me abundance of life,  
and I want to abide in your love,  
always. **Amen.**



### **OUR PRAYERS**

*Here are some prayers on this Sunday's theme. Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.*

Heavenly Father, thank you for generously sending us your Son  
to be our bread of life.

Like a loaf that is made for tearing and sharing,  
he gave his life that we might have life in all its abundance,  
and generously share his love with others.

Give me the courage to love as he loves,  
and care as he cares, knowing that you will fill any gaps in me.

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, you heard the cries of your people in the wilderness, and sent them manna from heaven. I pray for those who are starving, who would welcome stale crumbs, as there is no food for their children. Give them bread for today and, for tomorrow, hope. Bless, Lord, the work of the Daylight Centre. I pray for...

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, your Son saw the crowd's hunger for healing, and - having compassion for them - gave selflessly of his time and fed their inner needs. You see our needs too, and give us the strength to live through pain. I pray for...

Father, hear my prayer.

*Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.*

## **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.**

## **PRAYER OF BLESSING**

*A closing prayer of blessing for this week.*

Lord, bless and guide me,  
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.  
Go before me, watch over me,  
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**