

# THE SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT

2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020 – 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity / Proper 13

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## Collect

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,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## Isaiah 55:1-5

Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.  
<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not  
bread,  
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.  
<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.  
<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.  
<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

## Psalms 145:15-end

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.  
<sup>16</sup> You open your hand,  
satisfying the desire of every living thing.  
<sup>17</sup> The Lord is just in all his ways,  
and kind in all his doings.  
<sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.  
<sup>19</sup> He fulfils the desire of all who fear him;  
he also hears their cry, and saves them.  
<sup>20</sup> The Lord watches over all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.

<sup>21</sup> My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,  
and all flesh will bless his holy name for ever and ever.

## Romans 9:1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my  
conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup> I have great  
sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could  
wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ  
for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to  
the flesh. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the  
adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law,  
the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> to them belong the  
patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes  
the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for  
ever. Amen.

## Matthew 14:13-21

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. <sup>14</sup> When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd;  
and he had compassion for them and cured their  
sick. <sup>15</sup> 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.' <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to  
them, 'They need not go away; you give them something  
to eat.' <sup>17</sup> They replied, 'We have nothing here but five  
loaves and two fish.' <sup>18</sup> And he said, 'Bring them here to  
me.' <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> And all ate and were filled; and they took up  
what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets  
full. <sup>21</sup> And those who ate were about five thousand  
men, besides women and children.

## Prayer after Communion

Strengthen for service, Lord,  
the hands that have taken holy things;  
may the ears which have heard your word  
be deaf to clamour and dispute;  
may the tongues which have sung your praise be free  
from deceit;  
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love  
shine with the light of hope;  
and may the bodies which have been fed with your  
body be refreshed with the fullness of your life;  
glory to you for ever.

# NOTICES

## Face coverings?

Like the rest of society, our church community has a range of different views about face coverings. The current position, in a nutshell, is this:

- In view of the recent compulsory introduction of masks in indoor public spaces such as shops, the Bishops of the Church of England have indicated that we are “strongly advised” to wear face coverings in church.
- As a result of the Prime Minister’s announcement two days ago, we currently expect to be required by law to wear a face covering in church from 8<sup>th</sup> August.

Please keep in mind all the usual caveats. A mask used improperly may be worse than no mask. A mask is not a complete solution to the problem of cross-infection and, in particular, is not a substitute for social distancing and good hand and respiratory hygiene. We wear face coverings for the protection of others, not for ourselves. We do so in deference to those who should be in a position to know better than we do about the precautions that will be effective.

My late friend Hugh, when he was a novice monk, asked his Novice Master how we was supposed to live his life in a monastery when there were things he didn’t like and other monks he didn’t like. The wise Novice Master replied that Jesus didn’t command us to like one another, but to *love* one another. I personally find this story helpful in working out my attitude to face coverings!

## Wednesday Holy Communion

Wednesday Holy Communion returns this week. Please join us this Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August at Holy Innocents, Broughton Mills. The small, friendly congregation drawn from across our parishes and outside it will be glad to welcome you.

## Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer continues to be available online. The service is about 12 minutes of psalms, readings and reflection. You can join in with the responses or just listen.

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/4742/page/55145/view/>

## Next week

Next Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> August, is the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity (Proper 14) and is the Second Sunday of the Month. Services are as follows:

9.30am Holy Communion (Kirkby)  
11am Holy Communion (Broughton)  
6pm Evensong, lay-led (Woodland)



Feeding the Five Thousand, Marten van Valckenborch (1535-1612).

## MESSAGE

I wonder if you can remember that period when even the church tried to rationalise miracles? People still do it occasionally, but it was very common a few years back. My school chaplain, a devout man of God, was of that persuasion. I remember an RE lesson in which it was suggested that the Red Sea was parted by winds, earthquakes, freak tides or some combination of these. I remember another lesson in which it was suggested that the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 was really a miracle of human kindness. Jesus persuaded the boy to give up all that he had, everyone else who had food was then persuaded to do the same, and everyone was fed. Jesus is a great moral teacher, but he doesn't need to be God.

If that is what lay behind this story, then all 4 gospels have got it very wrong. All four think this is a story worth telling. It's one of only 11 or so events in Jesus' life that they all choose to mention. None of them mentions an outbreak of generosity in the crowd, or Jesus encouraging it.

The point of explaining away miracles is to make the Bible seem more plausible. If we can reduce everything in this book to the physical, the rational, the normal, then we won't have to worry about proving the metaphysical. But as we topple the miracles one by one, we finally arrive at the miracles of the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus. And if Jesus wasn't God and didn't rise from the dead, what is the point of the Bible at all? If everything that points to God is a rational occurrence that would have happened anyway, then we have no evidence, no reason, to believe in a God who is outside the physical world at all. God becomes pointless. And Jesus can't just have been a great moral teacher. As C. S. Lewis famously argued, Jesus himself didn't leave us that option. He spoke and acted as if he was God. So he must have been a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord.

Let's look at this story then, the only miracle apart from the resurrection to appear in all four Gospels, on the footing that a miracle was worked by Jesus, who is Lord and God. On the surface, the focus is simple. The miracle is performed to satisfy a need. People are hungry. Once we accept that Jesus performs miracles, this one doesn't seem very special. Granted, it is one of relatively few that don't involve healing; it is in all 4 gospels, which is unusual; and 5000 men plus unknown women and children are fed with virtually nothing. But why is all this so important? What got it into every gospel?

We can best understand this miracle if we think of it like we would a parable. There are some tensions, some questions that it seems to raise and perhaps answer.

Let's begin with the opening verse. What has Jesus just heard about? The execution of John the Baptist. What is his response? To withdraw. Why does Jesus withdraw? Generally, because he wants to pray. In fact, he achieves this in the verse that immediately follows our passage. Jesus' desire is to be alone, and to pray. What happens? He is interrupted. He is followed around by a crowd who want something from him.

What is Jesus' response to the frustration of his own wishes? He feels compassion for those who are pressing upon him. He cures their sick. We assume that he must have talked with them too, because a fair amount of time seems to pass. Jesus then feeds them. All this for people who were a potential annoyance. That is the tension here: Jesus' wishes and the crowd's desire. A tension between the self and others. Individual and group. Between what we want and what others need. Between our own purposes and God's purposes. Jesus resolves this tension in favour of the other, in favour of his neighbour, and in favour of God – because he has compassion.

You may remember this word that we translate as 'feeling compassion', from the reading on Trinity Sunday, when Jesus looked at the crowd, felt compassion, and observed that the harvest is plentiful but the workers few. It is a word that has connotations of gut-wrenching. When Jesus looks on a crowd of humans, he sees them not as we see them, but with the insight of God. When God looks on us, he knows enough to feel gut-wrenching sympathy and love for every one of us.

The next tension in this story is over responsibility. Did you notice: the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowd off to fend for themselves. His response is "you give them something to eat". When the disciples are nonplussed, only then does Jesus step in to guide them. The parable teaches that feeding the hungry, helping those in need, is not someone else's responsibility: it is not the responsibility of those who are in need to help themselves. It is not God's responsibility to respond to prayers that people should be spared. It is our responsibility. This is incredibly important. How many times have you heard Christians whose first response to bad news is, "we must pray about it" who then do nothing else? If we see need like God does, we will feel a gut-wrenching obligation to pray and act.

Look at how Jesus acts: he looks to heaven for guidance and strength, he gives thanks for the means at his disposal. That's prayer. He then takes what he has, and acts immediately. Jesus' solution is to get his disciples together and to get things done. This is what is to be done about the ills of the world, about its suffering. This is the Christian mission. It is about bringing what we have to Jesus, about giving freely – sacrificially in fact –

not about apportioning, or shirking, responsibility. Discipleship and compassion together resolve the tension over responsibility. When we follow God, the responsibility is no longer ours alone, or God's alone, but we act immediately and joyfully with God.

One tension is not resolved: that of the abundance of the leftovers when so many are fed with so little. There is more left over than there was to start with. Why was there so much spare? What happened to it next? Why does the story end in this way? Should we even care about the leftovers? Isn't the story complete when everyone is fed? Then why are they pointed out? Notice that we are told not only that all ate, but that all ate and were satisfied, or filled up. The story leaves us to wonder about this. Like a good parable, there are deeper layers to explore, on which to speculate. It may be as simple as a demonstration of God's overwhelming generosity. It may be a warning against the human economy of accumulating and hoarding wealth. It may be a lesson that, when we participate in God's work, the result is not tit for tat, measure for measure, but unlimited generosity.

Think of today's story then, not just as another example of a miracle, of Jesus being kind. Think of it as a parable, one that teaches us about God's priorities of prayer and action, of self-giving and love of neighbour. A parable that shows us why, through prayer or entreaty, we are not to pass responsibility to God, or to victims, or to others, but to take it upon ourselves.