

Morning Service 1st August 2021

Call to worship - Ps 23: 1-3, 5-6 (MSG) & Prayer

Quiet time

Prayer of Thanks

Bread Salesman

- **Hymn** - 'Jesus the Lord says, 'I am the bread'' - R&S 199

Talk 1 - Bread

Prayers - Thanks and Lord's Prayer

- **Hymn** - 'Your words to me are life and health' - R&S 321

(children if there are any! leave for Sunday Club)

Offertory thanks

POI (for everyone)

Reading 1 - Ps 78: 17-19; 21-29

Poem - Rumbling tums

Reading 2 - John 6: 23-35

Talk 2 - Hunger pangs?

- **Hymn** - 'O Word of God Incarnate' - MP 177

Blessing

POI (church people)

Call to worship - Ps 23: 1-3, 5-6 (MSG)

GOD, my shepherd!

I don't need a thing.

You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word,

you let me catch my breath

and send me in the right direction.

You serve me a six-course dinner

right in front of my enemies.

You revive my drooping head;

my cup brims with blessing.

Moment for preparation

Prayer of Thanks

Lord God, giver of life,

you bless us with everything we need -

and with so much more.

Help us to remember we don't just need to keep our bodies properly fed,
but we need our spiritual food too.

Lord God, feed us with Your word we pray,

satisfy us with knowing and feeling Your presence with us always,

and strengthen us by Your kind and gentle Spirit -

so that we will know the joy of being with You our whole life through.

Amen.

Bread Salesman

John 6.24-35

'Today's special offer is 'The Bread of Life' – as much as you can eat! Fast food? Junk food? Forget it! Health food? Real food? Forget that too! What you really need is food that feeds your soul, food that nourishes your spirit, food that keeps you going not only all day but all the way to eternal life. No other supplements needed. There's only one producer of this product: Jesus Christ. Franchises are available in a town near you: visit your local church now to ask about this special offer. Lifelong guarantee of quality and satisfaction (terms and conditions apply).'

- **Hymn** - 'Jesus the Lord says, 'I am the bread'' - R&S 199

*Jesus the Lord says, I am the bread,
The bread of life for the world am I.
The bread of life for the world am I.
The bread of life for the world am I.
Jesus the Lord says, I am the bread,
The bread of life for the world am I.*

*Jesus the Lord says, I am the way,
The true and living way am I*

*Jesus the Lord says, I and the light,
the one true light of the world am I*

*Jesus the Lord says, I am the life,
The resurrection and the life am I*

Talk 1 - Bread

There's a story way back in the OT, in Exodus, 2nd book of the Bible, about the people of Israel. The whole nation had been slaves of the Egyptians for many centuries, but God had miraculously rescued them from Egypt through a very faithful man called Moses, and promised them a land of their own, a fabulous land where they would be free and happy. But first they had to take a fairly long walk through a desert.

Now, God loved the Israelites very much, but they were a pretty ungrateful lot and sure enough, not long in to their walk, they started moaning and groaning (as some do on long journeys) 'Are we nearly there yet?' and 'I'm hungry!'

Now, God had actually made sure they did have everything they needed, but still they moaned. The bible says, (Ps 78: 21-25 MSG) 'When God heard that, He was furious ...

It was clear they didn't believe God,

had no intention of trusting in His help.

*But God helped them anyway, commanded the clouds
and gave orders that opened the gates of heaven.*

He rained down showers of manna to eat,

he gave them the Bread of Heaven.....

he sent them all the food they could eat.'

And this manna stuff God gave them, they used to make bread, so that's why the Bible says God gave them Bread of Heaven.

I need a volunteer for a food tasting please. (Check volunteer has no food allergies). I have here some iced buns with edible icing words on them, all bread-smelling and sweet and yummy, and I also have here a small, beautifully formed, very useful cardboard box with lots of lovely edible icing words on it too.

Volunteer - please take whichever one you'd like to eat! And no surprise, the buns are the winner!! Thank you volunteer 😊.

Now, we all love tasty things for our tummies to eat don't we! But the Bible tells us that (Matt 4:4 GNB), 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks.' Hmmm, so where do we find out 'every word that God speaks'? we can't get that at our local shop can we?! (ask the congregation) Nah! We get God's words from our Bible of course! Now our bibles are books, usually with a cardboard outside, and full front to back with lots of words, a bit like our cardboard box here. And, well unfortunately there are lots of people who think that reading their bible is just a long list of 'do this' and 'don't do that' - about as much fun and as much use as eating this cardboard!

But no! Our bibles are full of wonderful, tasty stories and teachings, as tasty to our lives as the iced buns are to our mouths and tummies; In our bibles there are dashing heroes and beautiful heroines, great battles lost and won, magnificent treasure, fabulous palaces and temples, incredible miracles, heart-warming love stories, greedy kings being taught a lesson by lowly shepherds. There are poems and songs, sadness and crying but also laughter and dancing, people getting lost and being found, rescues and reunions, there is wisdom, encouragement about how to live the best life possible, and of course, the love of God for each one of us running through the whole thing.

Is God's word, (our spiritual food from the bible), just a dry, tasteless, bunch of words, like eating cardboard? NO! It is the delicious, sweet, tasty, nourishing Bread of Heaven, the best iced bun ever, God's amazing love for us all in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayers

Praise you, God. You are very great in every way!

Please give us the things we need for today. (Thank You) for You will (always) give us what we need.

We're sorry that we do wrong things and disobey. (Thank You), for You forgive us when we say we are truly sorry.

God, help us in everything we do.

Please help us to live for You all through each day.

For You always listen when we talk (to You) - help us to listen when You talk (to us). Amen.

• Hymn - 'Your words to me are life and health' - R&S 321

*1. Your words to me are life and health,
put strength into my soul;
enable, guide and teach my heart*

*2. Your words to me are light and truth,
from day to day I know
their wisdom, passing human thought,*

to reach its perfect goal.

As in their truth I grow.

*3. Your words to me are full of joy,
of beauty, peace and grace;
from them I learn Your perfect will,
through them I see Your face.*

*4. Your words are perfected in one,
Yourself, the living Word;
print Your own image in my heart,
in clearest lines, my Lord.*

(children if there are any! leave for Sunday Club)

Offering thanks

Dearest Lord God,

You have given us riches beyond measure. We can only return a fraction of what we owe You for Your goodness to us, but Lord, just as You multiplied the small gifts of a young boy to feed the 5,000 people, we ask that You will bless and multiply our money offerings in Your service for those in need, both physically, mentally, and spiritually. For Your glory we pray. Amen.

POI (for everyone)

Hannah Moss, a British Writer in the 1700's, said, "Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness, not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it: not figures of speech, but earnestness of soul."

So let's bring our Prayers of Intercession to the Lord, let's pray:

Holy Lord God,

Thank You that all Christian people around our world are one people in Christ. Thank You that You, Holy Spirit join our prayers together with theirs in one great aroma of praise to our God. Thank You Lord, that You hear our prayers and answer our heart's cry.

Lord, You have given us many nations in which to live and thrive, and together You have given us a world full of beauty, and wonderful resources enough for all to share and be satisfied.

And You have appointed leaders for each nation to shepherd their own people, and to work collectively for the good of all. Father hear our heart's cry for forgiveness, mercy and turning from greed for some, and for tenacity, courage, and Your voice to be heard in those who work for the good.

.....

Lord, You have given this world to us to tend, respect and steward. Collectively we have made a complete mess of this beautiful world, and now our planet burns and floods, is crippled with disease, starvation, and migration. Father hear our heart's cry for those putting their lives on the

line in stemming the flames, rescuing the flooded, treating the sick, comforting the bereaved, and sheltering the displaced.

.....

Lord, You have given us people to love and be loved by. But across our nation, relationships are ripped apart, mental ill-health increases, children have multiple addresses. Father hear our heart's cry for those we know living with broken hearts, fractured minds and nomad lives.

.....

Lord, You have given us this community of Your people in this town, to be Your hands, feet, love, servant, friend, and truth-light. Father hear our heart's cry for this place, for Your vision for us, for our lives for You, and for Your love light to beam and stream from within us here to our neighbours, all people out there.

....

In us Your people worshipping You, then through us Your people serving You, may this world in hunger find healing and wholeness. For Jesus' sake and Your glory, we pray. Amen.

Reading 1 - Ps 78: 17-19; 21-29

Poem - Rumbling tums, by Lucy Moore (2002)

*You know the feeling you get, like a twisting stripe of bright yellow in your tum,
... and you just know, any moment now, it's going to give one almighty gurgling growl?
And the juices in your mouth start running, and the thoughts in your head start running
on juice meat and crunchy vegetables, and sweet fruit ... and crusty bread and silky
butter and sticky jam?*

*And the salt air blowing up from the shore sharpens your appetite like an axe-grinder,
and you look at the grass under your feet and you wonder if it would taste so bad after
all, and you realise you've been listening (to the man), and laughing and marvelling
and wondering full blast since the morning and now it's tea-time and where did lunch-
time go?*

And it's a long way home..... But remember the bag on your back!

*Fumble it open - secretly, as tums are rumbling all around now - what a feast! Five
rolls, a couple of fish should help fill the gap until you're home again. Sneak behind a
bush to guzzle in secret But:*

'Is there any food? Anything at all? However small?'

*The rolls have little voices calling, 'Eat me! Eat me!' The fish try to swim up to your
mouth.*

You sigh and step out and shrug and say, 'Take this, mate. Take it all.'

*They take you with them to the man, who laughs away their rueful exclamations, and
thanks you, and thanks God with full hands and open heart and words that feed your
soul, and (He) breaks your bread and fish apart and breaks it apart again And again
.... And again.... And*

Passing it on, giving it out, His hands darting through a shower of crumbs and laughing with delight with the handfuls, armfuls, skirtfuls of bread and fish that His friends rush out to the people

You are standing in a sea of food They can't pass it out fast enough and you and the man are laughing at the sight great heaps of fishy bits and chunks of bread.

You gaze at it – is it real? You touch it, squeeze it, smell it, nibble it, munch and gobble it, swallow it and wallow in it, a whole mountainside of food!

You count the tubs of leftovers later. When every one of the five thousand has gone away, stuffed to the brim: twelve (tubs), full to overflowing.

And all this from Him. And you.

Reading 2 - John 6: 23-35

Talk 2 - Hunger pangs?

In our readings today we heard of two sets of people, both sets wanting food from the Lord, and in both cases, God generously gave them what they asked for. In the Exodus desert, the Israelites claimed hunger. Now God had already led them to a huge lush, green oasis area where they and their animals could find refreshment and shade, but they wanted more, and by God's grace they were fed, with quail and manna and as we read (Ps 78: 29), 'They ate till they had more than enough, for He had given them what they craved.' God gave them 'what they craved'.

On the shores of Lake Galilee, again God generously fed the people till they were all full, and yet having been fed once, all 5,000 of them from 5 tiny loaves and 2 measly fish, they wanted more, John 6: 30, '.. they asked Him (Jesus), "What miraculous sign will You give that we may see it and believe?" And throughout His ministry, Jesus did indeed give them what they craved.

Two sets of people, similar desires, God's generosity in giving and yet neither set of people appeared to have been satisfied. Contrast these peoples with King David and his words in Psalm 23, where David says of God's provisioning for him, (v5, MSG), 'You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head, my cup brims with blessing.' David's cries of hunger to the Lord bore a magnificent feast, so was this favouritism on God's part or what? Was it wrong of the Israelites to ask for food for their tummies?

All these people wanted bread, bread from God, bread from Heaven, the Bread of Heaven, and in the Lord's Prayer we too ask God to 'Give us today our daily bread' (Matt 6: 11). But then in (John 6: 35) '... Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of life".

You see, God gave all these people what their *heart desired*, what they *craved*, and the Lord does exactly the same for us today. Of course we all want our tummies to be happy, our bodies to be healthily fed, just like the Israelites did. But are we often as guilty as they were of expecting God to be nothing more than a genie we can call on to give us food on the table, a nice life and the occasional help with life's questions and dilemmas as a last resort? God is an abundantly generous God and will indeed meet our bodily needs, but the Lord so dearly longs for our **deepest desires**, our *heart cravings* to line up with what Jesus tells us in Matt 4 (GNB) that, 'scripture says, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks'.

The Exodus Israelites' desire was just for tummy food, and they got tummy food, tiny quail, and flaky manna-bread over and over again. Must have tasted similar to this cardboard after a while! What God had prepared for them, however, and so wanted to give them ASAP was not just that, but a whole vast country of their own, a lush oasis land of rich soils, clear, fresh waters, natural resources aplenty and a place to settle and call their own, a second Eden perhaps. Unfortunately, it took them 40 years to get their desires right, for them to want to live by every word that God spoke and when they did that, the promised land was opened to them. They could have had that years earlier.

The Galilee Israelites wanted tummy food, and they too got tummy food, salt fish and tough barley rolls, not dissimilar to eating cardboard possibly. What God had prepared for them and what was right in front of them was their Saviour, Jesus, the Word of God, incarnate, the eternal Bread of Heaven right there with them.

In the part of the Sermon on the Mount we call the 'Beatitudes' or the 'beautiful attitudes', we read in Matt 5: 6 Jesus says, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.', or as The Message paraphrase puts it, 'You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.'

What is God's word to you, a delicious iced-bun feast, or a dry, chewy, empty cardboard box (show box)? Do you come to God's word the Bible, maybe once every now and then, viewing it as just a bunch of words on a page, nice moral principles, sounds all very nice but nothing to make a difference to your life really, like an empty cardboard box? Our generous God gives us the desires of our heart, so if that's all you think God's word is worth, that is exactly what you'll get, and it won't satisfy you one little bit!

Or do you come to God's word daily, avidly, however little or much you have opportunity to read, as if coming to a feast or eating a delicious, iced bun, eagerly anticipating sharing a meal, time with your Father God, craving another mouthful of the Bread of Heaven words to feed your spirit and light your day? Our generous God gives us the desires of our heart, so if that is your heart desire, our craving, that is exactly what you'll get and more! and you will be filled to overflowing!

I love the picture we have in Ezekiel 2-3 of what the Lord desires our relationship to God's word should be. Ezekiel has a dream/vision in which God held out to him a book, in those days a scroll. Usually, a scroll has words on one side only, but this scroll was covered front and back, all over with God's words, words Ezekiel was to live and speak to the people around him. And God said to him, (Ezekiel 3: 2-4, MSG), "Son of man, eat this book that I am giving you. Make a full meal of it." And I ate it,' says Ezekiel, 'It tasted so good - just like honey.'

The more we read God's Word, the more we are fed. The more we are fed, the more we worship. The more we worship, the more we open ourselves to the abundant, relentless grace and generosity of God, the beautiful friendship of the Holy Spirit, and the joy of the love of our Lord Jesus. A church that grows is a church that lives the Word of God Incarnate.

God's desire, craving for us is not to be just surface Christians, hearing and reading His word but those words staying on the surface, going no further than our ears and eyes. That does nothing to fill or fulfil us, potentially leaving us empty, just like this box (hold up empty word-box). God wants, craves for us to take these words in deeply, to think about them, pray through them, follow the connections between them, talk with each other about them, let them nourish and permeate every part of who we are. Then

when we are so filled, then we have something to offer - the joy and generosity of the Lord and the love of Jesus that is alive in us through the word of God. That's what draws people to our beautiful, amazing God.

(Matt 4:4, GNB) Jesus says that, 'scripture says, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks'.

Matt 5: 6 Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

(John 6: 35, GNB) '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."

(Ps 78: 29), 'They ate till they had more than enough, for He (God) had given them what they craved.' Amen.

• **Hymn - 'O Word of God Incarnate' - MP 177**

*1. O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky:
We praise You for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A Lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.*

*2. The Church from her dear Master
Received the Gift divine,
And still the Light she lifted
Over all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket
Where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heaven-drawn Picture
Of Christ, the living Word.*

*3. It floats just like a banner
Before God's host unfurled;
It shines on like a beacon
Above the darkling world.
It is the Chart and Compass
That over life's surging sea,
Through mists and rocks and quicksands,
Still guides, O Christ, to Thee.*

*4. O make Your Church, dear Saviour,
A lamp of purest gold,
To bear before the nations
Your true light as of old.
O teach Your wandering children
By this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended,
They see You face to face.*

Blessing

*May Your words be to us our life and health,
the strength within our soul;
May Your words enable, guide and teach us
As we journey through this day and every day
To live in worship to You,
For Your glory and praise. Amen.*

POI (church people) - Thora

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