

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

Telephone Service for Sunday 8 August 2021 – Trinity 10

The service for today has been prepared by Liz Howlett, with a reflection by Jane Williams and can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley churches for the 10th Sunday after Trinity.

The Lord be with you, **and also with you.**

Psalm 34: 2,6,8

My soul shall glory in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles. O taste and see that the Lord is gracious.

Hymn: Alleluia, sing to Jesus

1 Alleluia, sing to Jesus!
His the sceptre, his the throne;
Alleluia, his the triumph,
his the victory alone:
hark, the songs of peaceful Sion
thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
hath redeemed us by his blood.

3 Alleluia, bread of angels,
thou on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia, here the sinful
flee to thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
where the songs of all the sinless
sweep across the crystal sea.

2 Alleluia, not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia, he is near us,
faith believes, nor questions how:
though the cloud from sight received him,
when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget his promise,
'I am with you evermore'?

4 Alleluia, King eternal,
thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia, born of Mary,
earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne:
thou within the veil hast entered,
robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
thou on earth both Priest and Victim
in the eucharistic feast.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) CCLI Licence 2370586

Invitation to Confession

We come, not because we make peace. Not because we treat the other as our self. Not because we walk the earth with reverence. We come because there is mercy, because there is grace, because your Spirit has not been taken from us. We come still thirsting for peace, still longing for love, still hungering for wholeness.

Prayers of Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Lord of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Ephesians 4: 25 – 5:2 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading

John 6: 35, 41 – 51

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty".

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Reflection

I am the bread of life: We have been in the sixth chapter of John's account of the gospel for the last three weeks. It's been three weeks of feeding, three weeks of bread, and we've got two more to go. Something is going on here.

Jesus begins it with five loaves of bread and two fish, the feeding of the five thousand. But maybe that's only to get our attention and to tell us that it is really not about the bread or fish. It is about a way of living, it is about a way of relating. Last week he said you have got to know the difference between food that perishes and food that endures for eternal life, between bread that is perishable and bread that is imperishable. And then he takes off on this bread of life stuff: the bread that lasts, the bread that endures, the bread that never runs out, the bread that never gets stale or mouldy.

The reality is that there is a lot of bread in this world. For Jesus, however, the only bread that matters is the bread that endures, the bread of life. But if you look through scriptures you will find references to all sorts of bread: the bread of adversity, the bread of tears, the bread of affliction, the bread of mourning, the bread of wickedness, the bread of idleness, the bread of the stingy, and it goes on and on. And when you get right down to it, there is really only two kinds of bread; the bread of life that feeds and nourishes and sustains, and all the other bread that leaves us hungry and malnourished.

How have you been fed by the life of another? What if that's what Jesus is talking about when he speaks of himself as the bread of life? Throughout the gospels we see him feeding and nourishing life in so many ways and circumstances: through his love, his presence, his guidance, and teaching; through his healing, his forgiveness, and mercy; through his generosity, his compassion and wisdom. This is the bread that feeds the soul.

Those qualities are not unique to Jesus. They can be ours as well. It's one way God shares God's life with us. We both eat that bread of life and ... we become it. We partake of the bread of someone else's life and our life is nourished, our life is sustained, our life is strengthened. Who would that person be for you? What's her or his name? What did he or she do or say that fed your life?

And the opposite question is this. When have you been bread in someone else's life? When have you fed and nourished them? When have you sustained them? When have you strengthened them?

We so often hear Jesus say, "I am the bread of life," and we assume he is the only loaf in the basket. But what if that is not what he is saying? What if he is not claiming to be the exclusive loaf of bread in this world? What if he is teaching us what being the bread of life looks like so we can become that bread, so we can be that bread for another?

Could you believe that about yourself? About another? About God? Often, we don't. That is the problem that the religious leaders and authorities have in today's gospel. They begin complaining because Jesus said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

The issue is not that they don't believe that God provides or that God feeds. The issue is that they know Jesus and his mum and dad. They know where he is from. He is the kid from Nazareth; he could not be bread from heaven.

Fortunately for us we don't have that problem. We know Jesus is from heaven. We have a different problem, however. We know that Jesus feeds and sustains us, but we're not sure how we can pass that on. How can we be the bread of life here across the Bride Valley, within our relationships near and far? How can we bring nourishment to each other.

As a church community I think we should not underestimate the difference we make just by being together each Sunday. Praying weekly and even daily. Maintaining that Christian presence within the villages. Upkeeping the church building so that it is a praying presence now and firming it up for the future. Whether we are part of the PCC, the team looking after the church practically or we contribute in other ways.

Walking alongside families at key life stages, the birth of a baby, the wedding, the funeral and beyond. Standing firm in our faith is our way of being the bread of life here, pointing to God for the people around us, as much as for nourishing us. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

1 All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3 God's great goodness ay endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of nought.
Evermore, from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

In lives where love is born this day
Thanks be to you, O God.
In families where forgiveness is strong today
Thanks be to you, O God.
In nations where wrongs are addressed, where
tenderness is cherished, and where visions for earth's
oneness are served
Thanks be to you, O God.
May those who are weary find rest.

Hymn: All my hope on God is founded
4 Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5 Still from man to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

*Meine Hoffnung stehet feste Joachim Neander (1650-1680)
Paraphrased Robert Bridges (1844-1930) CCLI Licence 2370586*

Prayers
**May those who carry great burdens for their people
find strength.**
May the midwives of new beginnings in our world find
hope.
**And may the least among us find greatness:
strength in our souls
worth in our words
love in our living
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
**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**

The Peace

God has called us to live in peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The Blessing

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Hymn: You shall go out with joy

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field
shall clap, shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and you'll go out with joy.

(repeated)

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