

Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry worship for individuals or a family
Sunday 25th July 2021 at 10:30 am.

Call to worship

Let us rejoice, Jesus is in our midst. Feed us, Jesus, and fill us with hope.

Let us be glad, Jesus has bread and fish to spare. Free us, Jesus, from the pursuit of food that does not satisfy.

Sing for joy, people of God; God gathers up the pieces of our lives, that nothing may be lost.

Thanks be to God!

Hymn R&S 294

Come down, O Love divine! Seek out this soul of mine and visit it with your own ardour glowing;

O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear, and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

There let it freely burn earthly passions turn to dust and ashes in its heat consuming; and let your glorious light shine ever on my sight, and make my pathway clear, by your illumining.

Let holy charity my outward vesture be, and lowliness become my inner clothing; true lowliness of heart which takes the humbler part, and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

Opening Prayer

Living and loving God, we give you thanks and praise for this new day. We come before you as we are, your children who have been adopted into the family of God. We praise your name as you have brought us together in this time of worship, where we know that you will take what we bring and you will do amazing things.

Lord of all creation, giver of life, today we offer ourselves to you. You are the one who sustains us. The one who nourishes and strengthens us throughout our daily lives. We praise you. Teach us how to give ourselves to others, generously and wholeheartedly, sharing who we are and what we have.

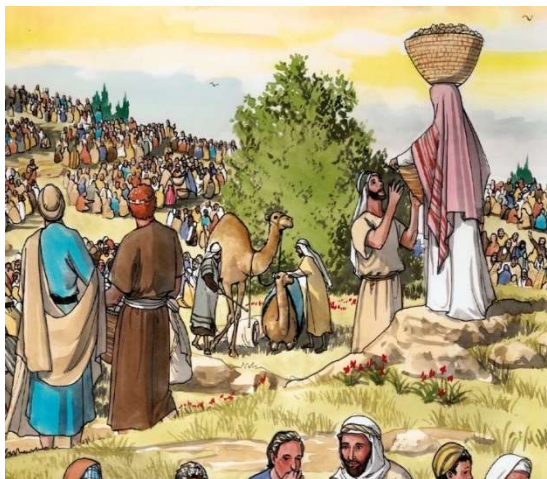
May we learn to share all the world's resources, so that everyone has enough of the good things that you provide. May we all rejoice in your goodness and we ask that you take our longing for reassurance and hope and that you transform us renew us, as the people made in your image.

Saviour of the world, we come as a great crowd, hungry to feed off your every word. We come as the people called to follow you. Holy Spirit of God, we come alone of our own free will, wanting to serve you in our daily lives.

Gracious God, forgive us when we take for granted all that we have been entrusted and blessed with. When we fail to acknowledge that we have more left over than others have to begin with, forgive us and change our hearts that we may become people who give generously, share abundantly and live simply to your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, who fed a waiting multitude, feed us this day, we pray. Thank you, God that we are forgiven, that we can lean on your goodness and generosity, knowing that and we have been set free to serve you. **Amen**

Readings



2 Samuel 11:1-15 - In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent his soldiers to battle, but David remained at Jerusalem.

Psalm 14-The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.

Ephesians 3:14-21- to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.

John 6:1-21- Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated

Hymn

God bless to us our bread,
And give bread to all those who are hungry
And hunger for justice to those who are fed.
God bless to us our bread.

Reflection

I begin with a wee confession. I don't know very much about football. However, I was really struck by the actions of England and Manchester United footballer, Marcus Rashford last summer. When the government announced that they would not be providing free school meals through the holidays, Rashford stepped in to ensure all would be fed.

Ensuring all are fed is the plot of our Gospel reading this morning. The story in our Gospel reading from John is often called: "The Feeding of the 5000." It's also a story that is found in all 4 gospels. We refer to it as a miracle. And it was. Not so much because so little fed so many, but because what was hopeless became possible.

As we heard:

When [Jesus] looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

I don't know about you, but I definitely hear a note of incredulity in Philip's voice when he articulates his concerns to Jesus. Did you notice - Philip's concerns, perhaps even despair about how on earth they will be able to feed ALL the people present in the crowd? Do these

concerns resonate with us at all? Do we often think: how on earth can ALL those who are hungry/go hungry in Sheffield and across the world be fed?

Indeed, locally food banks in Sheffield over the past year have seen the number of households using the banks increased by more than 92 per cent. Globally, about 690 million people globally are undernourished. Startling facts which can feel almost too overwhelming.

There are two relatively simple and conventional ways of interpreting the miracle. One interpretation is to hear the story as historic, that Jesus literally multiplied a paltry bit of food into a miraculous overflowing abundance. Another interpretation is symbolic, something like, everyone took a tiny wee bit and they shared a symbolic meal. But this traditional reading doesn't do full justice to the story. Indeed, it tends to domesticate Jesus' real message.

Jesus' radical message. Because the really striking part of the story is not so much that Jesus acts alone. Rather, the story is one of encouragement. Reminding all of us that we are called to remember and act like the little boy in the story. Remember that he brings all that he has. And when he does this, Jesus shows His disciples and, thus all of us, a way for giving what we have and letting God use what we have and add to it in order to accomplish what God calls us to.

God matches the gifts we bring to Jesus so that the things God calls us to, can be tackled. It is something to remember when the crowd looks too big, the work too hard, the situation too hopeless. It is something to remember when our own resources look too meagre, our efforts too small, our spirits too low.

As we go out this week, let us remember it is not up to us to feed the whole crowd, to solve the whole problem, or to fix the whole world. Rather than thinking that there does not seem to be enough for everyone, it is up to us - to share what we have got. Because our loving, generous God takes what each and every one of us has—spreading it around to those who need. The rest will come. Because God is God, the rest will come. For now, we can all play our part.

Hymn for Reflection – Until all are fed

How long will we sing? / How long will we pray? How long will we write and send?

How long will we bring? / How long will we stay? How long will we make amends?

Refrain

Until all are fed we cry out. / Until all on earth have bread.

Like the One who loves us each & every one... / We serve until all are fed.

How long will we talk / How long will we prod? How long must we fret and hoard?

How long will we walk to tear down this facade? How long? How long, O Lord?! *Refrain*

How can we stand by / And fail to be aghast? How long 'til we do what's right?

How could we stand by / And choose a lesser fast? How long 'til we see the light? *Refrain*

On the green, green grass they gathered long ago. To hear what the Master said.

What they had they shared - some fishes and some loaves. And they served until all were fed. *Refrain*

Prayers of Intercession

We thank you that even the crumbs of our lives can be collected by you are useful to the service of your kingdom. We thank you for your endless overflowing grace that knows no bounds even as we hesitate to share our resources.

Provider God as you heard the rumblings of the tummy of your people, in the wilderness and fed them bread from heaven, we recall today how you fed the crowd that followed you. They gave all we had and you blessed it and there was sufficient for all.

We pray for our world ...we remember Germany, Belgium, and West coast of America.

We pray for churches across the world. Places where Christians are being persecuted, places where the gospel is being shared and is changing lives.

We remember those places where there is conflict and trauma. We remember Haiti, Brazil, Israel and Palestine, India

We pray for our own communities. As we emerge from lock down, we pray for those who are ill with COVID-19. Those who are sick, those who have suffered loss and those who care for and console them.

We pray especially for those we know personally who are facing difficulties at this time and who we name in a time of silence.... Fill them, Lord, with your healing presence and remind them of your promises.

May we always look to you, our provider, the one who gives us life and the one who feeds us our daily bread. All this we ask in and through the precious name of Jesus.

Closing Hymn – R&S 353

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea; there's a kindness in his justice which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more keenly felt than heaven:
there is no place where earth's failings have such gracious judgement given.

There is plentiful redemption through the blood that Christ has shed;
there is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the head.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple, we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined, by the glory of the Lord.

Blessing

May we go into our week knowing we are loved perfectly, saved eternally,
and empowered as a disciple of Jesus to share God's love with everyone we meet.

Amen.