

Pentecost 9 – 2nd August 2020

WELCOME

Greeting and welcome to each and every person this morning.

Isn't it great to gather again to celebrate and give thanks and praise to our amazing God?

Later on in our service this morning we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion and my suggestion is that today instead of the empty plate and the empty cup we will actually partake of real elements that will symbolize the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, during the playing of "There is a Green Hill Far Away" I would encourage you to get some bread and some form of liquid in preparation.

INSTRUMENTAL PIECE

(with a picture of the HC setting)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Now that we are prepared let us with longing hearts seek God who loves us and cares for us and who never holds back feeding those who are hungry.

HYMN

Perhaps you might like to stand or remain seated as we worship and acknowledge that we are all welcomed as we gather today to meet with our God who accepts us and calls us to be a light to the world.

Our first Hymn this morning is No 474
“Gather us In”

PRAYER

Let us pray:

Living God, we pray that you will not hold back from us this day,
that we will know your faithfulness and your goodness in this hour.

Refresh our hearts Lord and renew our love, pour your Spirit into our souls and inspire us to be like you, to love and care and share with others who we are, and what we have.

Jesus, you will always find us longing after you, because we need you more than oxygen, more than any word can say. Amen.

GOSPEL INTRODUCTION

To open up the theme of our service today let us hear God’s Word from the Gospel of Matthew, the account of Jesus feeding 5000 men.

To make this feeding even more amazing it’s thought that the number present including the women and children, was possibly 10 to 15 thousand.

The number of men is listed separately in the Bible account because in the Jewish culture of the day, men and women usually ate separately when in public, while the children ate with the women.

So as we hear the Gospel may it come to us, not only in word and sign, but in power and love.

READING: Matthew 14:13-21 (David McLeod)

KIDS TALK

“Are you ready for Jesus to use your life”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us now join in our Prayers of Confession, let us pray:

When we think we have no solutions to our problems,
Forgive us, O God, and transform us.

When we think we have nothing to offer,
Forgive us, O God, and transform us.

When we are ashamed to be honest with you,
and dare not bring our struggles to you,
Forgive us, O God, and transform us.

When we want to hoard what we have and not share it,
Forgive us, O God, and transform us.

And now let us spend a moment in our own personal reflection. (silent time)

We know, loving God, that you hear us when we pray.

We long for the day when you will find only good within us.

We open our eyes and our hearts to your transforming and everlasting love. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear these Words of Assurance:

No-one who comes to God, will be turned away empty.
Jesus sees our deepest need and bids us come.

We are forgiven; receive his peace!
Thank you, God.

SERMON

Do you see yourself in this morning's Gospel story?
It's important that we do, because the Bible will never
have relevance to us unless it becomes a mirror, in
which we see ourselves.

Certainly I'm in the story.

In the face of a problem, it's tempting for me to
concentrate on what I don't have, and what I can't do,
instead of focusing on what I do have, and what I can
do.

A poet has written: (and it's printed in your newssheet
today.)

It's not what you'd do with a million
if riches should be your lot,
but what are you doing today
with the dollar and fifty cents you've got?

(food for thought, eh?)

In today's reading when it was getting late and the
people were getting hungry, the disciples focused upon
their inadequacy and were ready to send the people
away.

But instead, Jesus asked them to take stock of their

resources, and they said, “We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish.” V17

There were thousands of people there, and the disciples had only five loaves and two fish.

Does that sound familiar?

Such great need, such paltry resources.
So much to do, so little to do it with.

It’s so easy to become overwhelmed in our kind of world, isn’t it?

It’s so very tempting with what seems to be such a great imbalance between need and resources, to simply give up, turn off the compassion switch, send the people away, and look after number one.

Well, that’s the very thing Jesus refused to do.
That’s the thing Jesus always refused to do.

It’s never enough to see that the needs of one, or the needs of a few are met, not if we belong to Christ.

In fact, it may well be that the most accurate test of our Christian commitment is the size of our circle of compassion.

We must never be content as long as there are people in need.

It's true that at first glance, our resources seem woefully inadequate.

"We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish."
But look at what Jesus did with that.

He said confidently, "Bring them here to me." V18

Note, that Jesus didn't tell them off for not having more.
He didn't ask them, nor does he ask us, for more than we have to give.

(but neither does he ask for less.)

But when we give it in love and trust, we discover that our "all" is enough.

After receiving the food they brought, Jesus asked the people to sit down on the grass.

Doesn't that form a picture of confidence and peace?

They weren't panicking or clamoring for food.

They were sitting on the grass, waiting expectantly.

Then Jesus blessed the food, broke it, gave it to his disciples, and they gave it to the crowds.

The text says then that "all ate and were filled." V20

Look at the gracious way in which Jesus ministers to people's needs.

He could have done it all himself, but he chose to let his disciples to have a part in it.

He took what they had brought, blessed it, and then allowed them to distribute it to the people.

What they had brought was not enough, without what

Jesus did with it.

Our resources alone are never enough.

But what an honour Jesus gave to his disciples!

And what an honour he gives to us, to allow us to share in the compassionate ministry of Christ, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, telling the story of God's love made known in Christ.

When we understand it, such a responsibility is not a burden, but an honour.

It is our privilege to be called by the name of Christ and to be used by him in distributing gifts of his grace!

In Matthew's story, there on that hillside in the grass, a miracle took place.

And I'm not particularly concerned how you understand that miracle.

It could be that Jesus used the power of prayer to increase the amount of food.

It could be that through the loving example of a few who were willing to share what little they had with the many, others in the group began to take out of hiding the food they had stashed away for themselves.

Or, it could be in this sacramental moment, when everyone was so moved by this loving presence of Jesus and the unselfish sharing of the group, each one only took a small fragment of the food and was content with the spiritual nourishment.

It doesn't really matter how you understand it, the fact is, a miracle took place that day.

I also see in this account a metaphor for the living of life.

I see in it the BEST way – no, let me make it stronger – I see in it the ONLY way to handle the hunger of life.

When we take what we have and bring it to Christ, when he blesses it, adds his power to it, and gives it back, then, it is enough.

Above all else, this story is about the sufficiency of God's grace.

Everything we need in life is available to us as a gift of God's grace.

It's not always everything we WANT, but everything we NEED is available.

Jesus took the food and blessed it. And in the blessing, he acknowledged that every good gift is from God.

We may think that what we have is inadequate.

But there is more where that came from.
God's abundance is greater than all our needs.

When we trust that, and live our lives in that security,
life becomes content and the good gift that God intends
for it to be.

Amen.

HYMN 609

As we sing our next song, may we reflect on who we
are and what it is we are called to do as the followers of
Jesus.

"May the mind of Christ my Saviour"

OFFERING INVITATION

Despite the fact that we are not gathered in our church
building I share with you an Offering Invitation:

When the disciples went to Jesus with a problem, he
turned it back on them.

'You do something about it,' he said.

When they complained about how little they had, Jesus
said, 'Bring it to me.'

And the people's needs were met.

Let us offer what we have to Jesus, without holding
back.

And let us marvel at what we can do together, when we give our gifts of money, time and talents – however great or small.

(pause for a time of reflection)

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray:

We offer ourselves to you, O God.

Take all we have

and all that we are

and use it to change the world

into a place of justice and peace. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We have gathered today

to meet with our God in worship.

Let us pray to him now.

(kneel in aisle)

Lord, awaken in us our need of you

and make us hungry and thirsty for you,

both as individuals and as the Church of God.

Let no other issues side-track us from seeking you,

and increase our love and compassion
so that we long to serve out your love
to the world around us.

Silence

Bread of heaven:
on you we feed.

Lord, allow our world to see the true value of things,
so that the worthless and dangerous is unmasked
and real needs acknowledged.
Guide our leaders in wisdom and integrity,
and enable us all to co-operate in proper care
and stewardship of the world's resources.

Silence

Bread of heaven:
on you we feed.

Lord, as we eat our food this week,
remind us of your spiritual feeding.
May the meals we prepare and eat together
be opportunities for drawing closer
to one another and to you.

Silence

Bread of heaven:
on you we feed.

Lord, we pray for all who need medical treatment
or are waiting in pain for surgery.

We pray for those who have become addicted
and long to be set free.

We pray for all whose wrong choices
have ended in heartache, disillusion and despair.

Silence

Bread of heaven:
on you we feed.

Lord, thank you for feeding us
with spiritual food that satisfies our souls.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

HOLY COMMUNION

Month by month we celebrate Holy Communion together, may we never ever forget or take for granted the amazing love of God and the sacrifice of his Son Jesus on the cross.

As recorded in the Gospels Jesus, at his last supper with his disciples asked them and us to break bread and drink in remembrance of him.

Allow me to share with you from Paul's Letter to the Corinthians his important instructions to the early church and that has been handed down to us today.

BIBLE READING 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

Let us sing HYMN No 511 that will lead us into the breaking of bread.

BREAKING OF BREAD

SHARING THE CUP

DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS

CONCLUDING PRAYER AFTER HC

Let us pray:

We thank you God our Father, that through word and sacrament you have given us your Son who is the true bread of heaven and food of eternal life.

When we have doubts,

loving God,
challenge and equip us:
to feed the hungry,
to heal the sick,
to be your body in the world.
Inspire us to give without holding back,
and to offer our whole selves
to do your work. Amen.

HYMN INTRODUCTION

We certainly live in a hurting and hungry world that
needs the love of Christ.

Perhaps in our closing song you might like to say “Yes”
to Christ, “Here I Am Lord, send me?”

Hymn No 658

BLESSING

May God’s blessing be upon you
as you go in peace to love and serve the Lord
Amen.