

Proper 13 – 2nd August 2020 – 8th Sunday after Trinity



Over the past few weeks, behind the scenes we have been taking the necessary steps to get church ready to reopen. When Louise and I initially worked our way through the Church of England guidance it didn't seem too bad, it was only when the policy was written down for PCC approval that it became fully apparent just how different it was going to be when we return to church and to be honest it felt cold and daunting. Last Sunday James and Sian moved all the heavy items out of the nave and this week there has been 2 cleaning teams in and we are now ready to begin the process of welcoming people safely back into church, tentatively starting on Wednesday evening this coming week. Things will be very different and later today there will be an email sent out to give some guidance on what to expect when returning to church. The written word looks no less daunting now than it did 2 weeks ago but, having spent 2 evenings in church this week, the feeling is very different to the written word. There is that same welcoming warmth there always is in St Mary Magdalene's. Yes we will be sat a metre and a half apart, we will be required to wear face covering, but in every aspect of life this is our new 'normal' world.

Our gospel reading is that well known and much loved miracle of Jesus feeding the 5000, a miracle that obviously made an impression as it is recorded in all 4 Gospels.

Fr Rodney will refer to that later but we are reminded that just as Jesus sustained that hungry crowd, week by week he sustains us in a spiritual feeding through the Eucharist and that has been missing all these weeks. We are aware that many will still feel a little unsure about returning and to those having shielded for the last 4 months taking extra care is still strongly recommended so we will be continuing our Zoom worship and home worship sheets, at least for the whole of August. It would be lovely to see those who feel they can return back to church, the building is ready to welcome but it is the people who bring the energy and soul into the building, it is there we can be spiritually fed and together we will build our new 'normal' over the coming weeks.

Collect for the day

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 ever. Amen

A reading from the book of Isaiah

55 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.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ 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.

A reading from the 2nd letter of Paul to the Romans

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ 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. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; ⁵ to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. ¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷ They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸ And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Words from Fr Rodney

The Gospel for today is probably one of the best known stories of Jesus, and which we know as the feeding of the five thousand. As with many of the stories of Jesus, it is a story in which Jesus performs a miracle, but what sort of miracle is it? If we take the story just as Matthew tells it, Jesus takes five loaves and two fish and feeds five thousand people, and what's more there are even twelve baskets left over! But is that the only way we can understand what took place? It would be surprising if most of the people who gathered to hear Jesus had come along without bringing food and drink with them, and so could it be that the more plausible

understanding of the story is that most people had brought food and drink with them, and the 'miracle' of Jesus is that He inspired them to share what they had ! We have seen a similar 'miracle' in the last few months with Captain Tom who set out to raise £1000 for the NHS by walking laps of his garden, and ending up inspiring people all over the country to freely give millions to his Appeal. I'm sure there are many examples of that kind of miracle that have happened during the present pandemic. It is said that our recent experience has brought out the best in people both as individuals and communities, we can only hope that something of that will continue when the pandemic is finally over.

Let us pray

As we come together with our brothers and sisters in faith far and wide, we bring before you our thanks for the gifts of the past week and our prayers for the week to come. As we approach the time when our church will open its doors once again, we give thanks for all the hard work of those involved in the careful preparations that have made this possible and pray for the safety of all those attending. We also hold in our prayers all faith communities struggling to meet the needs of their congregations at this time and all those whose spiritual and mental well-being has been damaged by the challenges of the pandemic. Amen

Father we pray today for our world. For all those areas in which the pandemic is accelerating, especially in our own areas and in those areas that are struggling without the resources they need. We ask for your guidance for world leaders and all those in authority including our own government as they seek to find ways to meet the challenges of the present situation. We continue to pray that compassion, unity and tolerance replaces the hatred, greed and division that so often motivates our relationships with one another. Amen

Father we bring before you our own families, friends and neighbours, we pray for their safety and give thanks for their love and friendship. We pray particularly for families facing the school holidays in uncertain times and all those who are struggling to cope especially now that we are once again faced with separation from those we love. Today we also continue to give thanks for all the acts of kindness we have received over the past week and pray for all those working on the frontline services. Amen

Today we also pray for all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit particularly any known to us that we wish to pray for today... We continue to pray for all those who are vulnerable and struggling to cope, those with anxiety, those

who feel trapped in domestic violence and all those whose treatment has been delayed or compromised during the pandemic. We continue to pray for those suffering from the virus, their loved ones and those who care for them and ask for blessings on the work of all those working on treatments and vaccines. Today we also say a special prayer for our own mental well being as we face the difficult prospect of tighter restrictions on our everyday lives and relationships. We pray that together we find the will and the determination to bring about a swift end to the new restrictions. Amen

Finally, we remember today all those who have gone before us, those who have died recently, especially in the pandemic, those whose anniversaries are around this time and any we wish to pray for ourselves today... we thank you for their love, friendship and our memories of them and we pray for comfort and strength for their loved ones. Finally, remembering God's gift of eternal life, freely given we ask that they rest in peace and rise in glory, Amen

In a moment of silence bring your own prayers to God

The Lords prayer

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.