

Traditional Home service

Sunday 1st Aug

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we are all sinners.

We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.

For the sake of Jesus, who died for us, forgive us for all that is past, and help us to live each day in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah*)

READINGS - 2 Samuel 11.26 - 12.13a
Ephesians 4.1-16
John 6.22-35

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Jesus, joy of our desiring*)

CONCLUSION

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore;
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
I will ever give to Thee.

Jesus, joy of our desiring,
holy wisdom, love most bright;
drawn by thee, our souls aspiring
soar to uncreated light.
Word of God, our flesh that fashioned,
with the fire of life impassioned,
striving still to truth unknown,
soaring, dying round thy throne.

Through the way where hope is
guiding,
hark, what peaceful music rings;
where the flock, in thee confiding,
drink of joy from deathless springs.
Theirs is beauty's fairest pleasure;
theirs is wisdom's holiest treasure.
Thou dost ever lead thine own
in the love of joys unknown

Sermon Notes - Peter Smethurst
What does God want from me?

John 6.22-35

In last week's service Nigel Clent discussed the miracles of Jesus walking on the water and the feeding of the 5000. He asked the question *why was the feeding of the 5000 such an important part of Jesus' ministry that that it was the only miracle reported in all four of the Gospels?*

Nigel concluded that this was a test to encourage the disciples to keep their focus on Jesus and to trust Him for the solution to all of life's problems – including feeding possibly over 10,000 men women and children with a boy's packed lunch.

The requirement to keep your eyes on Jesus is highlighted in Matthew's version of Jesus walking on the water. Matthew included the story of Peter walking on the water after Jesus told him to **come** and says: **"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?"**

The answer to Jesus' question seems obvious. Whilst he was looking at Jesus he had the faith to get down out of the boat and walk on the water but when he took his eyes off Jesus he became fearful and began to sink.

I find that description fascinating. If you have ever stepped off the side of a swimming pool you will know that when your feet touch the water you do not "begin to sink". Rather you go down like a stone. You certainly do not have the time to cry out "Lord save me!" In Peter's case however the implication is that he slowly started to sink with enough time to cry out and for Jesus to catch him.

St John's Gospel describes Jesus' walking on the water as happening **"later that night"** – that is the same day as the feeding of the 5000, and today's reading starts with the crowd who had been fed are looking for Jesus the next day. They know that the disciples have taken the only boat and they knew that Jesus had not gone with them but they can't find Jesus anywhere and so they

decide to get into some boats that arrive from Tiberias and cross over to Capernaum to look for him. And sure enough they found Jesus on the other side of the lake and ask Him: **"Rabbi when did you get here?"** Clearly, they knew nothing about Jesus walking on the water in order to join His disciples in the boat.

Instead of answering their question Jesus points out that they were only seeking him out because He had fed them and not because they had understood the significance of the miracles He had performed – namely that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus goes on to tell them that they shouldn't be spending all their energy on perishable things like food but should be seeking the eternal life that only He could give because, and I quote: **"God the Father has given me the seal of His approval."**

The Father's seal of approval on Jesus was shown in numerous ways throughout the New Testament, starting with the voice from heaven when Jesus was baptised and the Father said: **"this is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."** After his baptism Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit and thereafter only did and said the things that the Father had shown Him to do or given Him to speak. Throughout His Ministry Jesus kept His eyes on the Father and signs and wonders followed Him wherever He went.

In addition to the signs and wonders the Father directly expressed His approval of Jesus again on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared to talk with Jesus.

An overawed Peter wanted to do something and offered to build three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah, suggesting that all three should be honoured. This prompted the Father to again speak from heaven leaving the three terrified disciples in no doubt that Jesus was in a different class to the giants of the Old Testament. **"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."**

After Jesus had told the crowd in Capernaum that they should be seeking the eternal life that only He could give they asked what they should be doing to carry out the works of God – or as one translation puts it: **"What**

does God want us to do?" And in verse 29 Jesus tells them: **"This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one He has sent."**

These words from Jesus are as true today as they were then.

Human beings always trying to earn their way to heaven. We like to feel that there is something that we can do to merit salvation. We want to somehow contribute to the saving of our own souls so that we can feel good about ourselves. As always Jesus knows our hearts. These people who Jesus had fed the day before said that they wanted to work for God but Jesus knew that they didn't want to have anything to do with God's Son.

Undoubtedly God wants us to do good works, but we cannot earn our way to heaven no matter how many good works we do.

Before we can do good works for God we must first believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. The only good work a sinner can do is to confess his sins and receive Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The true nature of the crowd in Capernaum was shown in their next demand to see Jesus perform a miraculous sign before they would believe in Him.

These are the same people who had just witnessed first-hand the multiplication of the bread and fish and here they were the next day asking him to prove His claims to be the Son of God.

The world wants to see before it believes but God says that if we believe then we will see. Faith must always come first, and without faith it is impossible to please God.

The crowd reminded Jesus of the miracle of the manna in the wilderness in such a way as to imply that Jesus was not as great as Moses because He had only multiplied food that already existed whereas Moses had called down food from heaven.

Jesus' answer is that it wasn't Moses who gave them the manna but God and that manna was literal food to keep the Israelites alive from day-to-day whereas He was the true bread that came down from heaven giving life to all men – to the whole world.

The crowd couldn't grasp what Jesus was saying and asked Him to give them the bread from heaven every day – so that they would never be hungry again.

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

John records later in this chapter that the crowd began to grumble about Jesus because He had said that He was true bread that had come down from heaven.

Because of their grumbling Jesus not only reiterated what He had said about being the bread of life but also went on to say that His flesh was true food and that His blood was true drink and towards the end of the chapter it says: **Many of His disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"** (6:60)

I have to say that I have some sympathy with the disciples and the crowd at this point. You have to remember that they didn't know that Jesus was going to lay down His life for the sins of the world and that He would teach His disciples to share bread and wine in remembrance of His broken body and His shed blood.

They couldn't understand that Jesus had been sent by His Father to suffer and die in the place of fallen humanity in order to bring about the New Covenant that the Old Testament prophets had written about.

The Contemporary Version of the Bible translates John 3:16 as: **God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.** This is the gospel in a nutshell!

The good news of the Gospel is that the cross of Jesus qualifies all of us for eternal life. At the cross all our sins are forgiven and we are given a right standing with God the Father. As Paul would say: we become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and the Gospel of Christ, is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.

But only those who believe. Those who don't believe in the Gospel do not qualify for the New Covenant.

Jesus himself answered the question “**what does God want from us?**” and that answer is to put our faith in Him.

The New Covenant is based entirely on God’s unmerited favour. There is nothing for us to do, nothing for us to perform, nothing for us to accomplish.

Our part is just to have faith in Jesus and to believe that we are totally forgiven and free to enjoy all the New Covenant blessings that come to us through His finished work!

Amen