

Written service for 1st August 2021



Before you settle down to worship you may like to find a piece of music to play during our reflection. It could be one of the following 2 suggestions, if you can access a recording of them, or your own choice maybe your favourite piece of music:

*Canon and Gigue in D Major by Johann Pachelbel
Peer Gynt Suite, No 1 Morning by Edvard Grieg*

Call to worship

Come all of you who are hungry
Come all of you who are thirsty
Come and worship our God, our provider
who offers us eternal life through Jesus.

Hymn As the deer pants for the water 544 StF, 37 MP

Prayers

Generous God, our Father,
You have created us and breathed life into us
You bless us with all we need because you love us,
many times you give us even more than we need,
more than we could ever imagine.
You have given us a Saviour in Jesus
who has offered us the gift of eternal life.
You continue to nurture and comfort us through the Holy Spirit.
You alone are the one who can satisfy us at the deepest level of our being.
Lord, we worship and adore you for all that you are and all you have done.

Lord you have given us so much,
but we often turn away from your way and get things wrong.
We rely on our own resources and don't turn to you when things are tough.
We ignore those who are spiritually hungry and thirsty
We fail to trust in you and your plans for us.
Forgive us Lord.

Giver and sustainer of life,
You have forgiven us through the power of the cross.
May we in turn be generous with our gifts and resources,
so that all may hear your words of forgiveness and eternal life.
Amen.

We say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn Break thou the bread of life 153 StF, 64 MP, 467 H&P

Bible Reading John 6:24-35

Reflection

There are some people who love John's gospel, it's depth, mystery and what seem like repeated circular discussions. There are others who don't like it, for exactly the same reasons. Let me suggest something to you that came out of a recent bible study on John, especially to those of you who struggle to read John. John is a bit like a piece of music...

Take a few minutes to listen to your favourite piece of music or one of the suggestions at the beginning of our written worship.

Can you hear the repeats in the music, can you hear different voices or instruments picking up the melody and rhythm. Let the music flow over you.

It is the same with John's Gospel the same theme is repeated over and over again multiple times, Jesus putting a message across a slightly different way each time. Sometimes we look at a whole chunk of the bible like we did when we read Mark's gospel in June. We could if we wanted to look at the all of today's gospel reading, but occasionally it is good to just sit with one verse, the one that sums up all of chapter 6, and see what that is saying to us today. It's a message we heard last week and it is a message we will hear again for the next 3 weeks as it keeps coming up in the lectionary, so I ask you to join with me in reflecting on verse 35, the first of the 'I am' saying of Jesus.

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.

Just ponder for a moment what Jesus is saying, that he is the bread of life what does that mean to you?

Bread is one of those foods that all over the world is a staple food, something that is crafted and created by chefs and slum dwellers alike. Something so basic, that few can live without it, bread is versatile, nourishing and comforting.

For my birthday this year I was given a kit to make Focaccia, Focaccia is a flat oven-baked Italian bread similar in style and texture to pizza. My kit included some herbs and salt to put on the top, although they did also suggest you could add some roasted vegetables too. It was a slow bread to make, mixing, kneading and rising, kneading and rising again, shaping decorating with herbs and rising for a 3rd time before baking.

It takes time to get to know Jesus, we need to spend time with him, in worship, prayer and reading the bible, it can be a slow process. For some people it can be quicker process, just as there are quicker bread recipes, but my journey with Jesus has been one of ongoing learning, which is not yet over. The end result of the Focaccia making, well, I have to say it was the nicest bread I'd ever baked and that first bite was so satisfying, soft and airy, full of flavour, drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with salt. It was one of those 'I want to hold this moment and not forget this taste' times. But as with any bread we bake or buy, it was soon gone.

But Jesus isn't speaking of physical bread that will be gone tomorrow, he doesn't go and leave us, he will never be finished or used up. He is there ready to metaphorically feed us, generously nourish us with wholesome bread. Whenever we come to him and say we are hungry or when we need comfort. Last week we heard the story of the feeding of the 5,000 where some didn't understand that this was a story about God's generosity, he provides far more than we need.

There are times when we hanker after worldly things, money, body image, fame, alcohol, drugs, relationship that don't let us flourish.... the list goes on, but none of these can really satisfy us, maybe they will for a while, but in the end they leave us lost and broken. Jesus on the other hand is ready and waiting to offer us a relationship that will go on forever. Do these thoughts match with yours when you think of Jesus being the bread of life?

What about moving on to think about water? What does it mean to you when Jesus says you will never be thirsty if you believe in him?

Water is the same if not even more essential than bread, none of us can live without water, it is really is what we are made of and keeps us alive even more than food, I'm writing this on the hottest day of the year so far and I'm sure like me, you have been thankful that you are able to go to a tap and get a clean drink of water, maybe even cool it in the fridge. Not all people are so fortunate.

You may have recently seen in central Europe there has been some destructive flooding, water can be powerful and deadly. Jesus though is the one who calmed the storm and brought peace to the chaos. The image this verse brings to mind is water bringing life not death. The bible story that readily comes to mind is the woman at the well, which happened earlier in John's gospel. Jesus talks of a well of refreshing and pure water, springing up inside those who believe in him.

Again this is symbolic, Jesus is not talking about actual water, it's not like my plant watering skills that at times leave the plants till they are wilting away in

the sun, sometimes never to recover. If we believe in Jesus there will be a constant stream of refreshing, life giving strength coming from him. Sometime though our actions and thoughts block that stream, like a dam and we start to struggle. Some of us may need to ask Jesus help us break down that dam so the water can flow freely again. Do you have different ideas of how Jesus relives our thirst?

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.

I hope this week that you feel God's nurturing and live giving presence in all that you do this week.

Hymn I heard the voice of Jesus say 248 StF, 275 MP, 136 H&P

Prayers for others

Lord we bring before you all those who will not have a choice which type of bread they eat today, because there is none left. Crops have failed, jobs have been lost and there is no money to buy the basics of life. Lord, give us a heart of generosity for those who are hungry.

Lord we bring before you all those who will not have a choice to drink fresh, clean water today, because there is none available. Floods have torn through towns and villages and left a wake of disaster, rivers are polluted, drought has left rivers beds empty. Lord, give us a heart of generosity for those who are thirsty.

Lord we bring before you all those who are searching for something more, because nothing satisfies them anymore. Those who are addicted to drugs, gambling, alcohol, fame and all the other things that can pull us down. Lord, we pray that we will have hearts of openness to all who are searching for you.

Lord we bring before you all those who are searching for more because they are ill or bereaved, searching for a pain free life, searching for cures, searching for peace. Lord we pray that we will have hearts of understanding and comfort.

We ask these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn Guide me, O thou great Jehovah 465 StF, 201 MP, 437 H&P

May the Lord bless you and take care of you;
May the Lord be kind and gracious to you;
May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace.