

Worship at Home Service Sunday 4th August 2024, with Revd Alan Sharp.

HYMN StF 57 “Let all the world in every corner sing”

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07cdvjm

Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King!
The heavens are not too high,
His praise may thither fly;
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King!
The church with psalms must shout,
No door can keep them out;
But, above all, the heart
must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King!

Opening prayer

We praise you, living God, for your undying love, ever at work for us and the whole world,
made known in every age: for its triumphant victory in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
for the continuing work of your grace in our lives,
and for bringing us into the fellowship of your people,
who worship you this day in every land.

Amen

Bible reading: John 6:24-35

So, when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Jesus answered them, "*Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.*" Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So, they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 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.

HYMN StF 153: "Break thou the bread of life

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MN9x8_F32sU

Break thou the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
As thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek thee, Lord;
My spirit longs for thee, O living Word!

Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with thee above;
Teach me to love thy truth, for thou art love.

Oh, send thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
That he may touch my eyes, and make me see:
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in thy book revealed I see the Lord.

Reflection:

Jesus can be very confusing! Perhaps you've already thought that about things that he says.

But in the Gospel passage today people get very confused. It's set on the day after the feeding of the 5000. A crowd have followed him to Capernaum - after he had walked on the water to be with his disciples (but that's another sermon!)

Jesus seems to believe that they have come because he had fed them and they wanted more food (food must have been hard to get in those days - there were no corner shops!). Now look carefully at verses 26-27, in italics above. He says, "You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." And then he tells them "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you"

Now this is a long chapter and during August the lectionary takes us through it all. So, I don't want to trespass on what may be said in the next few weeks! Today I want to reflect on Jesus being misunderstood. We know that he spoke in parables. They were not always understood - "the penny didn't drop"! This isn't a parable. He's upset that people don't see beyond the miracle to see the truth of who he is.

They're looking for something less than what he can offer - "food that endures to eternal life."

It's still possible for us to do that - to look for something less than he offers.

What are we really focussing on in life? What could Jesus mean when he said, "Do not work for food that spoils"?

Jesus is talking to people who are concerned with their physical hunger, but what Jesus offers can help with other hungers. We speak of hunger in more ways than just physical hunger. Some years ago, a Wimbledon ladies champion was asked what motivated her victory and she said, "I was hungry for it." Competitors in the Olympic Games will echo that. They will be hungry to win a medal - Gold, Silver or Bronze.

But we can misuse our hunger – becoming jealous of others, even doing them harm.

Sometimes our hunger for success can drive us too far - hurting ourselves as well as other people. That can lead to what's called "Burnout." Was this what Jesus means in this passage when he says "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that leads to eternal life"

Jesus fed the 5000 but he came to meet our deepest personal hungers - for love; for understanding; for trust and forgiveness; for self-esteem and worth, for peace of mind. These hungers are never really satisfied by many of life's gains - whether money, goods, or even relationships.

This passage is confusing. But it contains a challenge - to be hungry for things that endure, to trust in God's grace. Many years ago, I read of Jim Elliott, the subject of "Through gates of splendour" which tells of his death, aged 26, while attempting missionary work in Ecuador. I still remember one quotation: "He is no fool who gives what he can't keep, to gain what he can't lose"

As God supplied manna in the wilderness, so he answers our deepest hungers through Christ - the bread of life.

Prayers of intercession

Lord Jesus Christ, who fed a waiting multitude, feed us this day.

Feed us the bread of life, so that we no longer hunger for the things that harm our lives.

Feed us the bread of life, so that we no longer hunger for that which leads us astray.

Feed us the bread of life, so that we no longer seek quick satisfactions.

Feed us the bread of life, so that we no longer need to rely on our own strength.

We pray for those in our world who do hunger, not only those who hunger for food,

but also, the many people who hunger for freedom and justice.

We pray for those in our world whose cravings are out of control, for addicts and their families who go through so much pain.

We pray for those in our world who take the easy option, stealing and cheating others rather than working for what they want.

Lord Jesus, who fed a waiting multitude, feed all your children this day and every day.

Amen. The Lord's Prayer

Hymn StF 465: Guide me, O thou great Jehovah

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg

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

Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing waters flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
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.

(The video repeats the last lines in Welsh)

Benediction.

May God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit strengthen,
sustain and empower us
in our hearts,
in our homes
and in our community, today and always. **Amen.**