

## **2022 31<sup>st</sup> JULY – WORSHIP AT HOME – WHAT MUST WE DO TO PERFORM THE WORKS OF GOD?**

Dear friends,

The Stationing process is going on apace. It is a stressful time for the ministers and families involved, and for the circuit stewards as they try to steer a course which ensures that both the ministers and the churches have a fair hearing. We all value your thoughts and prayers at this time.

I hope that you are all well and that you are enjoying the summer. Every blessing, *Margaret*

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### **Call to worship:**

We come to you, Lord, with our curiosity and our questions.

We come seeking answers.

We are grateful for our daily bread, but we yearn for the bread of eternal life.

Let us seek to be fed and filled with God's life and love. **Amen.**

Lord God, giver of life, you bless us with all that we need – and with so much more.

Keep us from being so focused on our physical needs that we neglect our spiritual food.

Feed us with your word – satisfy us with your presence – and strengthen us by your Spirit – that we may share your eternal life. **Amen.**

O God, giver of manna from heaven, you provided for Moses' followers in the desert.

O Christ, bread of life, you fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish.

O Holy Spirit of the living God, here with us now, we ask you to feed us with all that we need, and that, thus fed, we might be satisfied. **Amen**

### **The words to 'Jesus the Lord said:' Singing the Faith 252**

***This is an Urdu song, anonymously written. V1 and VV3-5 translated by Carl Dermott Monahan [1905-1957] and v 2 translated by the Compilers of "Rejoice and Sing" 1991***

1 Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Bread, the Bread of Life for the world am I.

The Bread of Life for the world am I, the Bread of Life for the world am I.'

Jesus the Lord said, 'I am the Bread, the Bread of Life for the world am i.'

2 Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Vine, the true and faithful Vine am I.

The true and faithful Vine am I, the true and faithful Vine am I.'

Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Vine, the true and faithful Vine am I.'

3 Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Way, the true and living Way am I.

The true and living Way am I, the true and living Way am I.'

Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Way, the true and living Way am I.'

4 Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Light, the one true Light of the world am I.

The one true Light of the world am I, the one true Light of the world am I.'

Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Light, the one true Light of the world am I.'

5 Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Life, the Resurrection and the Life am I.

The Resurrection and the Life am I, the Resurrection and the Life am I.'

Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Life, the Resurrection and the Life am I.'

**Prayer:** Merciful God, we thank you that we can trust you, that you are faithful and provide for all our needs.

When we feel alone in the desert, that is where we meet you.

In the wilderness of our lives, we can turn to you and know that you will sustain us.

We worship you and we thank you that in you there is always hope. **Amen.**

Lord, help us to trust you more. Forgive us for those times when we do fail to trust you in all things – for those times when we complain that you have forsaken us, left us, abandoned us – for those times when we choose to go our own way because your way doesn't seem to make sense to us – for those times when we don't challenge injustice but just accept things as they are – for those times when we keep asking for more signs, more proof, more of everything – for those times when we begin to trust a little, then snatch it back because we are afraid.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us to trust you more. **Amen.**

When we have not trusted God with our lives but walked away instead – his everlasting arms are ever open to take us back, knowing that we are loved and forgiven. **Amen.**

Thank you, Lord, that we can trust you in all things.

Even when we don't understand – when we feel lost and alone – we can trust you.

When we wander in the wilderness, we thank you for being always there by our side and that you reach out and touch us with outstretched, open arms.

We thank you, for we know that we are safe with you, for you provide us with all that we need – both that which is 'on earth' and that which is eternal. **Amen.**

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.**

#### **John 6: 24-35.**

When the crowd realised that Jesus was gone and wasn't coming back, they piled into the Tiberias boats and headed for Capernaum, looking for him. When they found him back across the sea, they said: 'Rabbi, when did you get here?'

Jesus answered: 'You've come looking for me not because you saw God in my actions but because I fed you, filled your stomachs – and for free. Don't waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.'

To that they said: 'Well, what do we do then to get in on God's works?'

Jesus said: 'Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of commitment gets you in on God's works.'

They waffled: 'Why don't you give us a clue about who you are – just a hint of what is going on? When we see what's up, we'll commit ourselves. Show us what you can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures. He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

Jesus responded: 'The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven – the *real* bread. The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world.'

They jumped at that: 'Master, give us this bread now and forever!'

Jesus said: 'I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more – ever.'

#### **Comment: [David Adam – Sermon Illustrations]**

The early Church met regularly for the breaking of the bread. It is not surprising that there is a deep interest in Jesus as the Bread of Life. Today's Gospel reading ends with Jesus saying: 'I am the Bread of Life'.

It is worth looking at the questions raised in today's Gospel and the response Jesus gives to each of them as he seeks to clarify what true faith entails.

'Rabbi, when did you come here?' allows Jesus to discuss the motives of those who seek him. 'You are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.' We often fail to read the signs that point us to God. We journey on, ever seeking, and ignore the God who can satisfy our emptiness and who is in our midst. We fill our lives with perishable goods and forget the One who alone gives eternal life. 'Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.'

'What must we do to perform the works of God?' The work of God is to believe in him and in whom he has sent. The Greek word for 'believe' is far more than an assent to certain ideas about God; it is to have faith in him: that is, to have a living relationship with God. Faith is about our personal relationship with the living God and with Jesus, whom he has sent. If we do not have a relationship with God, we cannot truly perform his works. We are asked to give our heart to God. The German word 'belieben' is the root of the English word 'believe' and it means to 'belove'.

'What are you going to give us, then, so that we may believe in you? What work are you performing?' They hungered for more signs and more excitement so failed to seek the relationship that Jesus was offering. 'Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written.' Jesus responds by saying that it was God and not Moses that fed them in the wilderness and God gives you 'the true bread from heaven' that is, Jesus who came down from heaven and gives life to the world.

'So give us this bread always.' The 'always' on this occasion is the Greek 'pantote' which means again and again and again. Once more they have missed the point. Jesus clearly says: 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' By saying: 'I am the bread of life', Jesus is saying he is linked to the 'I AM' who is God. He is God. The love of God is revealed in Jesus Christ and he meets the needs of those with inner hunger and thirst. In whatever situation we find ourselves we can trust in the unfailing power and love of God. There is no doubt that in writing his Gospel John was aware of the sacramental implications of the bread.

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Throughout the world there are people who seem to have to fill their lives with food, with things, or with activity. No matter how much they get, they are still not satisfied. When young people say they are bored, it is usually when there is plenty happening around them but they recognise emptiness within. 'Bored' means having a hole drilled in you. There is something in you that things cannot fill, no matter how you stuff yourself or your days. God made us for himself and nothing else will really fill the space he created within us for himself. In each of us there is a space for the eternal and nothing less than the eternal God can fill it.

### **Meditation of Andrew:**

It's true what he said: they pursued him, not so much because of his message – because they were hungry to learn of God – but because they had been *physically* hungry and he'd given them something to eat. Their thoughts were of earth, not heaven; of what he could do for them in the here and now, not in the life to come. Never mind their immortal souls – it was their bodies that concerned them – whether they were clothed, housed, fed and watered, with money in their pockets and food on the table.

He offered so much – eternal life – and they failed to see it, each so much concerned with the rewards of this world that they had eyes for nothing else.

Oh yes, they'd played the part of devoted followers to a tee, pursuing him everywhere, walking in his footsteps – but they didn't really follow, not as he hoped. They were hangers-on – out for what they could get, intent finally on serving self rather than him – and the irony is that though he gave his all, they failed to receive.

Don't make that mistake.

Don't accept crumbs when you can have bread of life, food for your soul.  
He offers eternal nourishment – don't settle for less.

**Prayer:** Eternal God, you offer us so much in Christ – joy – hope – peace – forgiveness -assurance – wholeness – love; but while we pay lip service to such blessings, so often we fail to make them our own. Day after day we forget you, barely giving you a moment's thought – only remembering you in time of need. But then we expect you to respond – to deliver us from a crisis, redeem a situation, provide the answers we seek.

Teach us that you want to give us so much more – life in all its fullness, lived with you – and help us to receive that, with glad thanksgiving. **Amen.**

**An All-Age Prayer:** Generous and loving God,  
we tear up violence and share our peace.  
We tear up fear and share our joy.  
We tear up poverty and share our food.  
We tear up cruelty and share our kindness.  
We tear up all that divides us and share our love for Jesus. **Amen.**

**The words to 'We have a gospel' written by Edward Joseph Burns [b.1938] Singing the Faith 418**

1 We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for all throughout the earth;  
the gospel of a saviour's name; we sing his glory, tell his worth.

2 Tell of his birth at Bethlehem – not in a royal house or hall,  
but in a stable dark and dim, the Word made flesh, a light for all.

3 Tell of his death at Calvary, hated by those he came to save,  
in lonely suffering on the cross, for all he loved his life he gave.

4 Tell of that glorious Easter morn; empty the grave for he was free.  
He broke the power of death and hell that we might share the victory.

5 Tell of his reign at God's right hand, by all creation glorified.  
He sends his Spirit on his Church to live for him, the Lamb who died.

6 Now we rejoice to name him King: Jesus is Lord of all the earth.  
This gospel message we proclaim: we sing his glory, tell his worth.

**Closing Prayer:**

As we seek to do what you want, Lord,  
may we bring bread to the hungry,  
food for bodies and food for souls,  
strength for the journey, and hope for the future,  
in Jesus' name. **Amen.**