

Dear friends,

Here again! It seems that the weather is a little easier for us just now – and we are grateful for that. However, we think of and pray for all those who have been badly impacted by the weather – some of whom losing homes and livelihoods; this is mostly abroad but we see it on the TV – and we know that there are also wildfires in our country and pray for all who are caught up in the effects.

I hope that this offering today finds you well and I wish you every blessing. Margaret

Call to worship:

God says: ‘Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters – you that have no money, come and eat! Why do you spend money on that which is not bread, and labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen to me, eat what is good, and delight in me.’

Come to the living waters, you that have a thirst and cannot quench it – and you that hunger for more from life.

Come, you that labour but find no rest, and you that spend but are not satisfied.

Listen out for God, and you will find sustenance for your soul and a purpose for your life. Amen.

O God, you call us to the covenant you made of old, to be your people, faithful and true; to witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Let us come to you now, that we might know more of your love – experience more of your mercy – and share your peace with one another. Amen.

The words to ‘Guide me, O thou great Jehovah’ written by William Williams [1717-1791] and translated by Peter Williams [1727-1796] **Singing the Faith 465**

1 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.

2 Open thou the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream shall flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer, be thou still strength and shield
be thou still my strength and shield.

3 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.

Prayers:

All powerful God,

How can we ever thank you enough for what you did and continue to do for us?

You hate sin but love the sinner.

You never give up on us – Your love never wains.

You know and understand us.

Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we can cling tight and draw strength from you, for you have hold of our right hand.

You never let go. You never abandon us.

We thank you that you work all things for our good, nurturing us and strengthening our character.

Lord God, we give you thanks and praise. Amen.

Lord God, we often struggle with our conscience, wrestling with negative emotions, weaknesses and imperfections.

We hold tight to you but sometimes find our grip loosening.

We struggle with dread and worry about what may lie ahead instead of looking to you and placing our trust in your love.

Lord God, forgive our failings we pray. Amen.

Jesus, you gave up so much to bring salvation, enduring your body being broken and being placed on the cross to pay for our sins.

But death was overcome – life polluted by sin is now debt-free, and forever more we are washed clean with loving forgiveness. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and 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.

Matthew 14: 13-21 taken from The Holy Bible – The Message [the Bible in Contemporary Language] Copyright 2002 by Eugene Peterson

When Jesus got the news, he slipped away by boat to an out-of-the-way place by himself. But unsuccessfully – someone saw him and the word got round. Soon a lot of people from the nearby villages walked around the lake to where he was. When he saw them coming, he was overcome with pity and healed their sick.

Toward evening the disciples approached him: 'We're out in the country and it's getting late. Dismiss the people so they can go to the villages and get some supper.'

But Jesus said: 'There is no need to dismiss them. *You* give them supper.'

'All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish,' they said.

Jesus said: 'bring them here.' Then he had the people sit on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread to the disciples. The disciples then gave the food to the congregation. They all got their fill. They gathered twelve baskets of leftovers. About five thousand men were fed. [*although other versions 5,000 beside women and children. MC*]

Comment:

What Jesus heard caused him to withdraw to the desert: news of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas and Herodias. The passage that follows describes a nature miracle – the feeding of the crowd – preceded by a very brief reference to a number of healings. Yet the emphasis is not on miracles as such [about which many people today have doubts and questions] but on a large group of people who are so drawn to Jesus that they follow him round the lakeside, defying heat and hunger, staying until they have little chance of returning home before dark [a dangerous time]. What trust!

When the disciples draw Jesus' attention to the crowd's need for food – of which he must surely have been aware – he says: 'they needn't go away – you give them something'. In the event, Jesus feeds them himself – though there is no detail about how he might have done it. But the point is that Jesus meets the basic needs of this trusting crowd of people.

However the feeding was accomplished, here is an image of a little going a very long way – and with leftovers. Jesus' feeding of that crowd of Galileans can be taken as an anticipation of eating that same meal together with each other, with all nations, with God and his Messiah – an anticipation of eating in God's kingdom, the heavenly banquet.

Prayer

Let us pray for the kingdoms of the world – for the countries, nations and states – and their citizens – facing economic hardship.

Let us pray for the kingdoms of the world – for regimes and governments – and their citizens – engaged in conflict and warfare,

Let us pray for the kingdoms of the world – for non-governmental organisations working for justice, equality and co-operation.

Let us pray for the kingdoms of the world – for all the people who make a difference – for their families, neighbours, nations and the whole of creation.

We pray, Lord, that your kingdom will come here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Closing Prayers:

By the end of the day, the crowds must have been exhausted – yet they left with full stomachs and full hearts. They had met with Jesus.

You have fed us, Lord – and now we go to live the lives you call us to live.

May we be conscious of your perfect timing in our lives as we reach out to the outsiders as well as to our own. Bless us, Lord. Amen.

Lord, a new week lies ahead of me, and I really don't know what it will bring.

Help me to be aware of people around me who are struggling in any way.

May I be sensitive to all their needs and seek your wisdom as I come alongside them.

I want to be there for others, Lord, bearing your blessing. Amen.

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