



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 25th August 2024

compiled by Alison Morgan – Local Preacher

O Holy God, from our homes and from our churches, we feel your presence bringing joy to our hearts. May this time together remind us of your promise that you are with us, always, to the end of time. Amen

Song - Be Still (by Ben Fielding and Hillsong Worship)

1] Be still and know

That the Lord is in control

Be still, my soul

Stand and watch as giants fall

Chorus

I won't be afraid for You are here

You silence all my fear

I won't be afraid, You don't let go

Be still, my heart, and know

I won't be afraid

2] Be still and trust

What the Lord has said is done

Find rest, don't strive

Watch as faith and grace align

Chorus

Song

Let there be love shared among us,

Let there be love in our eyes;

May now Your love sweep this nation, cause us, O Lord, to arise:

Give us a fresh understanding of brotherly love that is real;

Let there be love shared among us, let there be love. *Dave Bilbrough (b.1955)*

Let us pray

We are blessed indeed, who have put our trust in you, who live to serve and, in our walk of faith, go where you might lead us.

We are blessed indeed, who have found our strength in you, who seek your face and hear that quiet whisper as you encourage us.

We are blessed indeed, who bow down to worship you, then go out in faith to do the tasks you have prepared for us.

Forgive us, Lord, when we rely on our own strength and not yours, failing to make use of the spiritual armour you provide, and are wounded in the fight.

Forgive us, Lord, when we forget your provision and your love, listening instead to the insistent voice of this world, and struggle to know what's right.

Draw us close, Lord; equip us with all that we need; empower us; strengthen our faith so we can engage with this present world under the banner of your light.

In your word, O Lord, we can trust; to you we can turn when struggling to cope, when faith is confused and its wisdom we seek.

In your word, O Lord, we can put our trust; to you we can turn when the world closes in, sin drags us down and we're back at your feet.

In your world we find wholeness and peace. Enough for each day. In your word we find hope for tomorrow, such mercy and grace. In your word, O Lord, we can put our trust completely. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Reading - John Chapter 6, verses 56 – 69 (NLT version)

Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. I live because of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, anyone who feeds on me will live because of me. I am the true bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will not die as your ancestors did (even though they ate the manna) but will live forever.

He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them. "Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascent to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But some of you do not believe me."

At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

Reflection

How many people do we know that had a Christian upbringing, learning about Jesus, going to Church and Sunday School, but lost their faith, for whatever reason. All we can do is pray for them and love them.

We can mention how much our faith has done for us, the hope, the love and purpose, but then we must let them decide.

After all, in the Gospel reading Jesus knew the pain of losing some disciples when doubts overtook their faith. Jesus wanted to explain to his disciples how faith in him nourishes our spiritual life, described himself as the bread of life, and promised that the one who eats this bread will live for ever. The disciples took this all too literally, and a fleshier interpretation. 'We can't eat you, they protested, that would be cannibalism.' 'It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless', Jesus says.

Compare the reaction of some of those whom Jesus fed earlier in John 6. In the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, they received the sustenance of actual physical bread, so some think 'this is what we are looking for' and they come seeking Jesus for a free lunch. Their perspective is fixed on the here and now, they do not see the gift of that perishable bread as a sign point to something much, much more. Jesus is offering

them a different kind of bread, a bread that sustains beyond the physical and into the wonderful Spirit of Jesus. This bread is Jesus himself, the one who said, 'I am the bread of life'.

Left to our own devices, we can easily mislay our faith, not lose it, but we can lose focus and become weary and cynical, easily cast down. We settle for how it is. But Jesus invites us to believe in him, as the bread of life. When we extend our hands to receive bread at communion, we are saying 'Yes, we need you, more than our limiting worldly perspectives. We need Jesus in our lives.

Simon Peter understood this. When other disciples were leaving Jesus, finding his teaching too difficult, Jesus asked him, "Do you also wish to go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

In other words, Jesus is the only one who can lead us deeper into God, deeper into all that we have yet to find and long to know. There is no one else who can take us on this journey. Only Jesus.

Faith is not a fleshly matter of feeling good when you pray, but a spiritual battle against doubt, and a will to get on with living a life of love for others; and this love is not slushy feelings, but a determination to be kind and compassionate to everyone.

Faith is not certainty; usually it consists of weighing up the probabilities and deciding that Jesus is the only way. If you have faith, give thanks, for it is God's gift. Try to be helpful to those who find faith difficult.

Jesus is the bread of life. There to be taken by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

We see Jesus as a doorway, where others only see a grave.

We all need Jesus. Amen

Hymn - MP 260

1] I am the Bread, the Bread of Life:
Who comes to me will never hunger.
I am the Bread, the Bread of heaven;
Who feeds on me will never die.
And as you eat, remember me –
My body broken on the tree:
My life was given to set you free,
And I'm alive for evermore.

2] I am the Vine, the living Vine:
Apart from me you can do nothing.
I am the Vine, the real Vine;
Abide in me and I in you.
And as you drink, remember me –
my blood was shed upon the tree:
my life was given to set you free,
And I'm alive for evermore.

3] So eat this bread, and drink this wine,
And as you do, receive this life of mine.
All that I am I give to you,
That you may live for evermore.

Brian Hoare (b. 1935)

*'To whom else could we go?
You alone have the words of eternal life.'*

We have chosen to serve the Lord.
Let us pray to him now.

We pray for those whose faith
Is being challenged or undermined

By inner doubts or outside influences.
We pray for those who build up our faith
And all who strive to proclaim the Gospel
In language that people understand.

Holy God, we believe:
Help our unbelief.

We pray for our torn and fragmented world,
Wrestling to equate the deep yearning for peace
With the instinctive urge for gratification and power;
That many may have the courage to walk God's way.

Holy God, we believe:
Help our unbelief.

We pray for our loved ones;
For those who life our hearts
And those who turn our hair grey.
We pray for those we instinctively warm to
And those with whom
There are frequent misunderstandings.
We thank God for our opportunities of forgiveness.

Holy God, we believe:
Help our unbelief.

We pray for all who are marginalised,
Scorned or rejected;
For those isolated through illness or imprisonment;
For those who feel that no one understands.
Surround them all with such love
That they may know they are precious to you.

Holy God, we believe:
Help our unbelief.

We pray for those approaching death,
That through prayers they may know themselves
Accompanied with love on the journey.
We pray for those who have died,
That they may come to know the full joy of heaven.

Holy God, we believe:
Help our unbelief.

We thank you, Holy God,
For making yourself know to us,
Both in daily living
And sacramentally in the breaking of bread. Amen