

Welcome

Jesus calls us, here to meet him, And we come – from afar or near, connecting together in this act of worship. We have been richly blessed, and we come to worship the living God, and to be filled again with your Holy Spirit. Amen.ⁱ

Song

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome...

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground

where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
All are welcome...

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome...

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome...ⁱⁱ

Prayers & The Lord's Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the way you have used the prophets from times past to deliver your message. We thank you for the modern-day prophets who continue to bring to us the truth of your word. Forgive us for when we fail to listen and pay attention, choosing instead to follow our own way. Give us the humility to recognise when we are in the wrong and deliver us from prideful thinking and behaviour.

[Pause]

Help us to not be too quick to act, but to continually look to you as the source of all that we need. We are thankful that you are a God of love and forgiveness, and we receive that right now, here in this place. Amen.ⁱⁱⁱ

We say together the Lord's Prayer:

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.

Introduction to the Theme

Can you remember the last time you were angry? The last time you had an argument? How did you react? Did it last a long time? Did it lead to a grudge?

Do you ever watch soaps on TV? They can make you think that people are always angry with each other - arguing and fighting all the time. That's not reality.

However, we do sometimes fall out with other people. Or someone upsets us and we might get angry. The letter written to the Ephesians doesn't say not to be angry. It actually says 'Be angry but...' It doesn't try to deny our feelings of anger when things are not right. But it does place a limit on how our anger should affect us.

Even Jesus got angry at times. Remember the story of when he frantically turned over tables because people were selling in the temple? There is a time and a place for anger, but there is also a recognition that this shouldn't cause us to do bad things.

The letter to the Ephesians says, 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger.' That's important. Deal with your anger before you go to bed. Don't let a grudge burn up inside you and cause hate. Anger and hatred can eat away at us and cause us to become bitter, which is not a good way to be. The advice is to deal with it.

The letter continues by giving more advice about 'building up' by making sure your words are kind. Its climax is the challenge to us all to 'forgive one another'. We all make mistakes. We all get it wrong. But when we do we should put things right and make a community of people that forgives.

Why should we do that? Well, the letter tells us when it says, 'God in Christ has forgiven you.' Through God's love shown in Jesus's life, death and resurrection, we are forgiven for the things that we do wrong and the ways in which we add to the pain in the world. How can we not forgive others, when God has forgiven us with such love?^{iv}

Readings

The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

So, the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on... And ten young men, Joab's armour-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him...

Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man."

The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (**2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33**)

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.

Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (**Ephesians 4:25-5:2**)

Song:

Jesus is the name we honour;
Jesus is the name we praise.

Majestic name above all other names,
The highest heaven and earth proclaim

That Jesus is our God.

*We will glorify, we will lift him high,
We will give him honour and praise.
We will glorify, we will lift him high,
We will give him honour and praise.*

Jesus is the name we worship;
Jesus is the name we trust.
He is the King above all other kings,
Let all creation stand and sing

That Jesus is our God.

We will glorify...

Jesus is the Father's splendour;
Jesus is the Father's joy.
He will return to reign in majesty,
And every eye at last shall see
That Jesus is our God.

We will glorify...^v

Reflection

Alice Young

"What food do we need"

The videos can be viewed at [Burley Methodist Church Online - YouTube](#) & [www.wandamethodists.org.uk](#)

Alternatively, the written text is provided below

To what are you being called?

Two questions for us to discuss and reflect on today, to help us shape our journey of discipleship. Firstly, how do we respond to Alice's invitation for "a deep and personal relationship" with Jesus Christ? Do you know something of that relationship? Do you find those words and images helpful?

Secondly, what would it look like for you to take a 'long-term' view? Are you someone who falls into the trap of society's glorification of the instant, or 'right now', and how could you tune into to God's slower, more lasting satisfaction?

Holy God, You are the bread of life. As we worship and reflect, we draw strength for today from your love for us. May we seek satisfaction beyond the short-term pleasures of this life, and connect with the spiritual base-note at the heart of all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray.

Loving and gracious God, we give you thanks for the gift of our voices. For those whose voices make beautiful music, and express emotions and thoughts too complex for words. For the parents and carers whose voices are a source of security, encouragement, and guidance. For the voices that offer us words of comfort and encouragement, that build us up and give us the strength to keep moving forwards. For the voices that bring us new ideas and insights that help us better understand the world we live in. For strong voices that speak up for justice, and fight for a world where no one is forgotten or left behind.

Today we pray for the voiceless in our world, for those who feel their voice is not being heard. We pray for those who have been robbed of their voice by an oppressive government or an abusive relationship. May they feel the warmth of your love, and be reminded of their worth. May our voices join with theirs to call for justice and peace.

We think of those who use their voices to oppress and intimidate. May they be shown a new way to live and govern, and learn to do so with humility and compassion.

We think of all the ways in which we can use our own voices. We pray for the compassion to offer words of comfort to others, the wisdom to offer guidance and encouragement, and the motivation to raise our voices and stand up for what we believe in.

We are sorry for the times when fear has tightened our throats... Fear of speaking out of turn and saying the wrong thing. Fear of sticking our heads above the parapet. Fear of speaking out the ideas and thoughts that could change lives.

God, grant us the courage to raise our voices in your name, in the name of love and justice. May we be your voice in this world, seeking to bring your kingdom closer, in Jesus' name.^{vi}

Hymn

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand hath made,

I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:
Then sings my soul...

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin;
Then sings my soul...

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home – what joy shall fill my heart;
Then shall I bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim: my God, how great thou art!;
Then sings my soul...^{vii}

Blessing

Go in grace, and know that you are called, Go in love, to find that calling and pursue it, Go in the Spirit of the Living God, to grow and learn and be transformed, Seeking justice in our world, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.^{viii}

Reflection

What Food do we need

Alice Young

Recently, I was browsing the internet looking for furniture inspiration, and I found these signs in the different sections of homeware sites, which people could put in their kitchens. So, here are some them:

- A messy kitchen is a happy kitchen, and this kitchen is delirious!
- Thou shall not weigh more than thy refrigerator.
- If you are what you eat, then I'm easy, fast and cheap.
- My next house will have no kitchen, just blending machines.
- A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.

These sayings seem to point us to some of society's attitudes about food, where takeaway and junk food are seen as the 'only enjoyable food'. Food is meant to satisfy us and as long as it isn't good for me, 'I am going to eat as much as I want'. But we could stuff ourselves at each meal, and still be hungry for something much deeper.

Paschal says that there is a 'God-shaped vacuum' at the heart of each person, and it can never be filled with any created thing. It can only be filled by God, who we experience made-known through Jesus Christ. The only thing that can satisfy our deepest hunger.

In John 6 we read: '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..."'

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."**(John 6:35, 41-51)**

For Christians, part of the pursuit of our Christian journey is that we begin to get to know God in a real and an intimate way. And part of the beginning of a relationship with anyone is that we get to know their name. Part of getting to know God in a real and intimate way is that we get to know his names.

In Exodus, we see with Moses that God declares: 'I am who I am'. And in John's gospel, there are 7 other 'I ams'. Jesus says that I am:

- The bread of life
- The light of the world
- The Door
- The Good shepherd
- The resurrection and the life
- The way, the truth and life

- The true vine.

God is a God who was, and is, and is to come. It is in knowing these names that we can get a deeper relationship with God as we travel through life.

John also loves life, and John loves living life to the fullest. And in his gospel, he uses the word ‘life’ at least 36 times as he tried to reveal to us what living in true life in-Christ looks like. And through his gospel, we can see that Jesus has a following – people see something attractive in Jesus. As John writes about Jesus, he writes about him in ‘action form’.

So, we see Nicodemus come up to Jesus seeking ‘real life’, and Jesus talks about himself as God’s only son, come into the world ‘not to condemn, but to save the world through him’. We see this ‘saving’ going on throughout the gospels, as Jesus is teaching, healing, loving, being and demonstrating ‘salvation’.

We’ve just read that Jesus says he is the ‘bread of life’, the very thing that we need for living life fully! The story of the feeding of the five thousand puts the story of Jesus being the ‘bread of life’ into a very real context. At this gathering, with so many people gathered to listen to Jesus, then (in John 6:5-7) Jesus asks ‘where shall we buy bread, for people to eat’. He already had an idea what might happen, and brought a solution to the missing packed lunches, using the gift of one simple packed lunch. Jesus knows about the troubles in our lives that we don’t even know exist yet, and he already has a plan for each of us – no matter how much we might stray from that plan. Psalm 22: ‘My help comes from the Lord’ and God shows up, even when we don’t know how.

So, the disciples were challenged by Jesus to provide a solution. They take this bread from the boy and hand it over to Jesus. And Jesus does something amazing! The food multiplies and there is enough food leftover for twelve baskets full! Jesus doesn’t just ‘do enough’, he does ‘more than enough’. He doesn’t just ‘satisfy’, he does more than we can begin to imagine.

And at the end of this story, Jesus knew that these people might force him to be king after seeing that, so he withdrew quietly, retreating across the lake. Jesus wasn’t coming for a political take-over, he was coming for a heart-takeover. And later, we see that the people realise Jesus has left him, they follow him across the lake. Jesus challenges them because his ministry wasn’t just about that temporary, physical food that filled their belly – that food will spoil, it won’t last. So Jesus asks us, and he asks them, can you come to me because of who I am? Who I am is greater than what I have done.

Can you come to me because of who I am? Jesus invites to journey into a real and intimate relationship with him, and that begins by knowing his name. Who is he? The bread of life. But knowing his name is just the starting point: if we begin to know who Jesus is, we can begin to understand that Jesus is so much more than physical bread. I wonder, if we want God’s power, but not the person, not the attitude-change that is required. We want the crown, we don’t want the cross. We want the glory, we don’t want the suffering. But, you and I have a soul-craving. Jesus alone can fill that hole.

We can be into the temporary, quick-fix so easily. Our society is obsessed with the immediate, the instant, but just because it’s quick it doesn’t mean it is right. Too often, we choose what is ‘right now’ rather than what is ‘right’. And Jesus wants us to trust him, to realise that he is the way, the truth, and the life, the bread of life, the satisfier of souls.

In Exodus we see that God sent the Israelites manna six times a week, providing enough for the day. But some Israelites would try to plan and take too much manna on some days, and it would rot in their tents overnight. Other Israelites wouldn’t obey God’s command and not take double-portions on the day before the Sabbath, and they would be left hungry. God was trying to teach them to trust him – and to trust God means daily dependence. Every single day, we have to trust that God will supply into our needs. And so, if we walk with Jesus, then we have to depend on Jesus every day.

Jesus says that the work that God requires of us is this: believe in the One he has sent, to believe in Jesus who was sent as a Saviour into this world – not to condemn, but to give life. The people in the story of the feeding of the five thousand were hungry, but they didn’t know what they were hungry for. We are asked to believe that Jesus is who he says he is. He is the same God who showed up in Exodus, with Moses and the Israelites. He is the same God who went with David, Gideon and Samuel. He is the same God who was born as a baby and walked on this earth, the God who went to a cross for us.

Today, we are asked to believe that Jesus went into the tomb, that Jesus was raised to life, that Jesus is coming back for his church. Right-believing will lead to right-living. If you read John 6: 61 – 71, you will notice that one-by-one the crowds left Jesus, until only the twelve remained. Although they have experienced a miracle, they have

walked away. Perhaps those twelve baskets of food are left over for those twelve disciples who stayed and believed.

We know where our hope is coming from – his name is Jesus, he is the bread of life who satisfies and fulfils every appetite that we have. So for us, as a church, as God's people, let us realise that people are hungry, but they don't know what they are hungry for. They may try to fill their lives with temporary stuff to fill their appetites, but with the wrong things. They are hungry for what we are hungry for.

And so I'll end with this quote from D.T. Niles, "I am just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." The same goes for us. That is us, as a church, we have found something that can satisfy our appetite, the bread of life. Thanks be to God.

ⁱ Written by Tim Baker.

ⁱⁱ Words and Music by M Haugen, GIA Publications Inc., 1994, Singing the Faith No. 409

ⁱⁱⁱ Written by Ramona Samuel.

^{iv} Written by Gary Hopkins.

^v Words and Music by Philip Lawson-Johnston, 1991, Thankyou Music. StF 354.

^{vi} Written by Emma Dobson.

^{vii} Words and Music, 1953, The Stuart Hine Trust. StF 82.

^{viii} Written by Tim Baker.

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