

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Mrs Helen Lunn. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Call to worship

Lord, give us eyes to see – to really see;  
hearts that believe – really believe;  
minds that understand – really understand;  
and lives that proclaim you as the living bread  
to all who are in any kind of need.

**Amen.**

### Hymn To God be the glory (Singing the Faith 94)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vbGFupxwu0>

To God be the glory, great things he has done!  
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,  
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,  
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;  
and give him the glory - great things he hath done!*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
to every believer the promise of God!  
And every offender who truly believes,  
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;  
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!*

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
but purer, and higher, and greater will be  
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;  
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!*

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

### **Let us pray together**

Come close to us, God of the morning,  
that we might see your glory in each new day.  
Come close to us, God of the noonday sun,  
that we might see your glory as each week passes.  
Come close to us, God of the evening,  
that we might see your glory as year turns to year.  
Come close to us, God of the night time,  
that we might rest in your glory at the passing of our lives.

Giver of life,  
when we have seen your greatness  
and sought to tame you to our cause,  
forgive our unworthiness.  
When we have seen your goodness  
and claimed it as our right,  
forgive our ingratitude.

When we have seen your mercy  
and continued to harbour grudges,  
forgive our lack of compassion.  
When we have seen your love  
and complained about our lot,  
forgive our lack of generosity.

Thanks to you, incarnate God, for the signs of your presence  
in the heavens and the earth below.

Thanks to you for the miracles of your self-revelation  
in the lives of people of faith.

Thanks to you for the wonder of our encounter with you  
as we travel on the journey of faith.

**Amen.**

### **Readings**

#### **Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15**

<sup>2</sup>In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

<sup>4</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

<sup>9</sup> Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’”

<sup>10</sup> While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

<sup>11</sup> The Lord said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”

<sup>13</sup> That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning, there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup> When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. <sup>15</sup> When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

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

<sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

<sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

## Reflection

The action in John 6 has shifted from a feeding miracle of the feeding of 5,000 people, to an increasingly heated argument over what it means. The scene has shifted from one side of the lake to the other, and we sense the conversation is narrowing down to one between Jesus and the Pharisees (those John usually refers to as 'the Jews'). The conversation raises questions about the link between experience, what we see and hear and touch, and what was written in the Torah and what we read in the Bible.

How does one interpret or inform the other? We read the Bible as part of a faith community and also, we read the Bible and put ourselves into the story of God's dealings with humanity. In the temptation story, Jesus said that people don't live on bread alone but also on the word of God. Theologian Karl Barth is said to have said we should evaluate major news events with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other and interpret the newspaper from your Bible.

In the Bible, God's provision for God's people is a key reason for faith. God promises to supply our need and calls us to trust him. The psalmist say that this is the reason to sing God's praises. Jesus speaks about this too: what does he mean when he links the works we should do and the faith we should exercise. Jesus shows how the Exodus story points to him, and

that faith in God is now channelled through faith in the Son whom the Father has sent.

Jesus seems to suggest that it's easy, just ask and we will be provided with everything we need. But what do we need? More than bread – although, for the starving, bread is very important. What are we to offer? Are the 'good works' of the church unconditional? Do we 'share bread' with too much or too little spiritual engagement? A university study on food provision by faith groups found that the work of food bank volunteers was seen as 'true Christianity in operation'; that cooking and eating together was about much more than food; and that even the gift of simple refreshments could give a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. There is more to feeding the hungry than giving bread, but what might be a good place to start?

Food poverty in the UK is as bad as it has been in living memory. 14 million people in the UK live in relative poverty. More than half of people in poverty now live in a working family. 2 million children in families are affected by severe poverty. Food bank use, creative schemes by schools to feed hungry children, soup and meal runs for the homeless, these are all ways in which people have responded to this.

Jesus was under no illusion about why the crowds sought him out - he had given them food to eat. So, Jesus spoke to them

about working for perishable food or working for food that lasts. The crowd had a dialogue with Jesus. Crowd: What should we do? Jesus: Believe in the one God has sent. Crowd: Show us a sign so we can believe.

They tried to manipulate Jesus to give them bread but he broke out of this circular discussion by reminding them it was not Moses but God who supplied bread from heaven.

Unrelenting in their quest for bread, the crowd increase their request: 'give us this bread always'. However, the answer is standing in front of them – 'I am the bread of life'. The crowd seemed only to be able to understand Jesus on one level and so failed to recognise what they had seen.

The crowd had seen a spectacular miracle and was greedy for more. That's a fairly human response; we see a good thing and we want to hang on to it. Do you start planning next year's holiday while still on this year's?

You see the same sort of thing in the story of the manna from heaven. If we'd read on in Exodus 16, we'd have seen how some Israelites, against Moses' command, kept some of the manna till morning. It 'bred worms and became foul' sounds even worse than when we see bread starting to go mouldy! You can't make a possession of the gifts of God.

Jesus challenges the crowd, asking them to stop and think about what lies behind the miracle. He contrasts physical hunger, met by the feeding miracle, and spiritual hunger, which he will also meet if only people will acknowledge it. Mother Teresa contrasted the physical hunger of those she worked among with 'another kind of hunger' we have in the West a hunger for love, for belonging, for God.

People talk today of a deep unmet spiritual hunger amongst those who no longer belong to any religious tradition. Is such hunger in society today?

We have seen in the last year how people are spiritually hungry. Outside of Trinity we have a put a prayer fence. We have put a bag of ribbons and asked people if they have a prayer to tie a ribbon around the fence as they say the prayer. We didn't know if people would take it up. After a couple of days of the prayer fence being set up I got a request for more ribbons. The fence is now awash with colourful ribbons and it just shows that people within the community are wanting to pray.

Also, over the course of the pandemic churches closed and moved online and more people viewed online worship than were coming into church buildings. A study by a research team at Durham University found that one in four people across the

UK had engaged in some form of online worship since the beginning of lockdown.

Are we in the churches led by our own need for God? Do we fit the description of the Church as 'one beggar telling another where to get bread'? We know, as the crowds around Jesus didn't, where to go to get our deepest needs met. That is why we're here. What Jesus says in today's Gospel affirms that our faith in him is the most important thing in our lives; it changes us, and it changes the world.

Although Jesus contrasts spiritual with material, this isn't because he doesn't care about the physical things, otherwise he wouldn't have bothered with the feeding miracle. But belief transforms us and the world lastingly. That is what is miraculous, enough for everyone becomes normal. That's why John's Jesus goes on about it so much. It's very good news indeed and he wants us to understand it.

So how can you respond. Why not join in with something happening in your local community, such as a food bank, or a project working with the homeless, or something less obvious – anything that, in some way, addresses people's needs. If this is not feasible, is there someone, a neighbour or a friend or family member, whose needs you could, in some small way,

help to meet? While you are doing this, think about what your needs really are, and what God might be needing from you.

**Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Heavenly Father, giver of all good gifts,  
we pray for all people who willingly use their time and gifts  
in the service of others.

We pray for all who set up and work in charitable  
organisations:  
bless them as they so freely give of their time and talents.

We pray for people who work together to bring healing,  
for all who work in hospitals, homes, the community:  
bless them as they bring blessing to others.

We pray for those who dedicate their lives to serving God  
in religious orders and communities:  
bless them in their gifts of prayer, hospitality and service.

We pray for people with the gift of words,  
for teachers, writers and communicators:  
bless the seeds that they sow.

We pray for those who don't feel as if they have a gift,  
or feel as if it goes unnoticed:  
bless them with the knowledge that they matter to you.

We pray for our church as a welcoming community,  
constantly being built up by our love for you.  
Bless us, Lord.

**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Hymn I, the Lord of sea and sky (Singing the Faith 663)**

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zr9SMm1gII>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.*

*Is it I, Lord?*

*I have heard you calling in the night.*

*I will go, Lord,*

*if you lead me.*

*I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have born my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts are satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

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### **Blessing**

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.**

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