

Service for Sunday 2 August 2020 prepared by Revd Pauline Crispin.

As I write this service, I think of you in your home and picture us sharing this time together. Let us sit quietly for a moment, and think about our journey here today, and how we are feeling now.

Are we ready to give God our full attention and worship him? Then let us come together to share in God's love, to lift our hearts and voices in praise and worship, to seek God's blessing with a new and deep experience of God's power and generosity. **Amen.**

Sometimes, Lord, we know we don't listen properly to you.

We are easily distracted. Or we listen, but still go our own way, putting ourselves first.

Sometimes, Lord, we don't trust you to meet our needs, to take care of us, to feed us with food both physical and spiritual. Sometimes, Lord, we are anything but prepared for our journey with you.

Sometimes, Lord, we look for our own ways out of a situation, instead of seeking and trusting you.

Forgiven by you, we can start anew.

We thank you Lord that we are loved and forgiven in Christ's name. Amen.

I have included this next worship song. Which was written 25 years ago, it has been in *Singing the Faith* for 9 years, so I hope that you might have come across it at some point. I felt the words spoke to many of us during this time of lockdown. We have had time to reassess all we once held dear, what is important to us and where our priorities are.

Sing or read:

1 All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss ;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

2 Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

3 Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition,

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Today reading is from Matthew 14: 13-21. This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (see Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, and John 6:1-14), a fact that speaks well of its importance to the early church. The Feeding of the Four Thousand is also recorded in Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-10. It is also a Eucharistic story with its overtones of the Lord's Supper. Where Jesus took bread, blessed, broke and gave.

Reading: Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This is a well-known story. If this were a modern-day account, we might say that a 21st century miracle would be to get folk to share what they have with the have nots. What a great miracle that would be!

Instead of looking at the feeding account, I would like to focus on the first verse. *'Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.'*

It seems a strange place to start the reading. What was it that Jesus had heard? What Jesus heard was the news of John the Baptist's death. We can often overlook the closeness that there must have been between the two young men. First of all, they were relatives, coming from the same family. They were close in age, only a few months different, so more than likely they would have spent time together when they were growing up. They have shared together that very special moment when John was baptising in the Jordan and Jesus came to John to be baptised. What an intimate moment that must have been for them both. No wonder Jesus needed to have time away from others to consider this news. Not only a time of loss, but also needing to bear in mind what this killing of John meant for his own ministry.

At crucial times in Jesus ministry he needed to retreat to a quiet place to pray and presumably receive strength, wisdom and guidance from His heavenly father. If Jesus, the son of God, needed to have these times of renewal, times of prayer then how much more do we, as mere humans, need these times of renewal and prayer?

In the busyness of our world have we taken the time to be with God, as much as we need to? Now one might say that God is always with us, so we are always spending time with Him. Yes, that is true God never leaves us, his presence with us is continuous. However, it is us who are not always present with God. We are distracted by so many things; we try to do things in our own power. Therefore, it is us who need to take the time out to be present with God. Jesus had to put his own needs to one-side when he saw the crowd. He wasn't able to have his time of solitude and prayer at that moment. However, just read a verse or two on from today's reading and you will see that Christ's top priority once he was able to was to then have His time alone with God: *'Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray.'* Matthew 14: 22-23a.

I invite you to take your time and revisit today's reading. Are you able to add and place yourself into the story? Think about who you might be. Maybe: One of the crowd following Jesus to hear Him teach and preach, maybe you are there to receive healing of some kind? Are you wanting something else from Him? Or are you one of the disciples wondering how

you will fulfil your calling, having to place deeper trust in Jesus? Or are you the person willing to share what you have with others? Or are you bringing something else or someone to Jesus, to have Him bless whatever it is? Or are you waiting for the crowds to go home, so that you can be alone with Jesus and have that prayer time with Him in the quietness. Think about what you want to say to Jesus. Think about what He might be saying to you. Or maybe you just sit in silence with Jesus, just know that he is there with you.

Let us pray:

God our Father, grant us the help of your Spirit in our prayers for the salvation of all people. We pray for the Church throughout the world for and for those worshiping at home, that in faith and unity we may be constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit for mission and service. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of the world for the leaders of the nations, that during these uncertain times they may seek justice, freedom and peace for all.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our country for those who have authority and influence, that all may serve one another in wisdom, honesty and compassion.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those among whom we live and work for all our neighbours, that together we may find joy in your creation.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all in sorrow, need anxiety or sickness, that in their weakness they may know your strength and in despair find hope.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In you, Father, we are one family on earth and in heaven. We remember in your presence those who have died. We pray for the family of Brian Guilment and particularly for Muriel in her time of loss. May we pray too for those who mourn the passing of Millie Martin. Help us to follow the example of your saints in light and bring us with them to the fullness of your eternal joy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as 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.**

Sing or read:

- 1 I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross on Calvary :
*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
sing it with his saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.*
- 2 I was lost ; but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up, and gently led me
back into the narrow way :
- 3 Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
bruised was I from many a fall ;
hope was gone, and shame distressed me ;
but his love has pardoned all :
- 4 Days of darkness still come o'er me ;
sorrow's paths I often tread ;
but the Saviour still is with me,
by his hand I'm safely led :
- 5 He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet ;
then he'll bear me safely over,
where the loved ones I shall meet :

Francis Harold Rowley (1854-1952)

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The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen

