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ORDINARY 19B

11th August 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayer

God who is mystery, God who is Spirit,
God who is Creator, God who is Christ,
This day, I come into your presence,
Open my heart and mind that I might receive something of your word today.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymns / Songs:

You might like to listen to one or both of these songs as you create space for God's grace to open you up during this time of worship.

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom – [YouTube](#)

36 STF – There's a quiet understanding – [YouTube](#)

Reading: John 6:35, 41-51 – [Click for reading](#)

Reflections on the reading

Today's reading from John's gospel follows the story of the Feeding of the 5000 where the real hunger of the crowd is provided for. In this passage Jesus declares himself to be the Bread of Life, the living bread that came down from heaven. However, we recognise that we need to be careful not to over-spiritualise these verses in a world where hunger is still a reality and where providing access to simple, wholesome food for our families, our communities and those in need is a priority.

How do you find food shopping? Is it something you look forward to, plan carefully, do you search for bargains, or see what takes your fancy or is on offer before you decide what you are going to eat or cook? The cost of food production is rising, crops are dependent on the climate, which is changing, there are places in the world where bread flour is scarce and hunger is a reality. And when we are hungry it is hard to focus on anything else but being hungry. We see this in the life of Jesus when he is fasting in the desert and the devil uses the tempting offer of turning stones into bread to satisfy Jesus' hunger.

In John 6, when the crowds come to Jesus, he criticises their motives for seeking him out. He challenges their need simply to focus on the food that perishes, but asks them to raise their aspirations higher. He wants them to understand that what he was offering was so much more than physical nourishment, but a way of living that would offer eternal life both now and in the life to come.

In John 6: verses 42 and 43 there is a lot of moaning and complaining which Jesus asks them to stop. He reminds them of their ancestors moaning in the desert despite having been given the manna to sustain them as they journeyed to the promised land.

He invites them to turn from their complaints towards him. He asks them to believe in him, to commit themselves, to turn away from the distractions of the temporary and to hunger for the Bread that lasts. In doing this he assures them that their lives might be given a sense and a

meaning that will go beyond this earthly life. He marries this with the sacrifice of his own life, the cost of his life.

What does it mean for us to really hunger for God? To not be satisfied with what we knew in our faith, last week, last year, but to ask ourselves today, are we hungry for an ongoing deeper relationship with God?

Are we finding ways to spend time daily to be equipped and sustained by God, just as we wouldn't wait days to feed our physical hunger?

Are we ready to follow the path of a follower of Jesus whatever the cost? Are we ready to wrestle with things that don't have easy answers, are we ready for people to challenge me and disagree with us, because we follow Jesus. Even in this chapter of John, there are contradictions or at least blurred edges – an insistence on 'only those who believe will never be thirsty' verses 'no-one who comes to me will be turned away'.

So, to conclude, I invite you shop, cook, eat, pray and share your faith in the days to come and may Jesus, the Bread of Life, sustain you, feed you, and encourage you for the journey ahead.

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Make me into a channel of your peace – a reservoir of your love, your hope, your joy.
Help me to be an answer to prayer,
This and every day,
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers

Monday 12th August

- What does the good news of the Gospel feel like to you? Can you express it as a prayer of thanks in just a sentence or two?

Tuesday 13th August

- Think of a question you have about your faith. Either look it up on the internet, or ask somebody else about it. How does God meet you in what you hear? Have you changed your thoughts or beliefs or feelings as a result of what you've learned?

Wednesday 14th August

- What injustices make you angry in the world? Consider the ways you see God as a God of justice and pray that God will work through those injustices.

Thursday 15th August

- Draw a picture of your local church. Include on the picture all the ways you see God at work, and all the things you want to ask God to work in. Pray about it.

Friday 16th August

- Look at the palm of your hand. Consider the story of Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey before his crucifixion and the crowds welcomed him. Think of five ways, one for each finger, that you welcome Jesus into your life?

Saturday 17th August

- Pour a glass of water. Think about the things you do that get in the way of your relationship with God. You might think it muddies the water of your life, but God forgives us for all these things, and offers us living water. Drink some of the water and give thanks for the way God reaches out to you with love and forgiveness.