



Readings, Reflection & Prayers

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

25 July 2021



StJohnsAL5

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Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

2 Kings: 4:42-44

Psalm 145:10-18

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21 – The Feeding of the Five Thousand (I think most of you know it)

Ephesians 3: 14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reflection from Anne Edwards

A crowd of five thousand -v- five loaves and two fish – this is the packed lunch Andrew brought to Jesus. Can you imagine the reaction of the other disciples muttering in the background? Some could be sniggering, others with their mouths open, nudging one another and muttering “muppet”! For me the significance of this story, this miracle which is the only miracle

shared between all four Gospels (apart from the resurrection) is not the actual feeding of about 5,000 (I think this number just signifies a large number of people) but what God can do with the little we offer Him.

In six weeks' time, Tim and Sophy, and their two boys, will come into our midst, Tim as our new vicar. After this time of vacancy and the earthquake of Covid-19, life here at St John's has changed dramatically. Two years ago I doubt if we could have imagined ending our Sunday morning eucharist by filing out of the building and singing the hymn outdoors! So you see we can do things differently – and my challenge to all of us is “What can we offer to God, to Tim, to one another, to the community around us that will demonstrate God's love, not only within the community of St John's but also outside its doors?” and thus draw others to Christ, and encourage them to become His disciples.

God may be sowing the seed of an idea; there may be an itch that won't go away of something you feel is missing from life at St John's which you long to see happening. Speak up! If Andrew hadn't spotted the boy – or may be the boy showed Andrew his packed lunch (we don't know which way round it was) – and brought Jesus' attention to the meager portion of five buns and two fish, all those people would have gone away with rumbling tummies, very hungry. Andrew wouldn't have known how the bread and fish could have made a difference – we don't know how our thoughts, ideas, suggestions could make a difference. We just have to offer them to God and let Him take it from there.

Today there is a great hunger – a hunger for the meaning of life. People are asking the question “Why?” We know so much of the what, when, how, but the 'why' can only be known by turning to God and discovering his creative love, the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit spilling out and spreading throughout creation, throughout the world.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul spells it out – he wants his hearers to grasp all that God has done in Christ, that they will get the magnitude of God's love and hospitality as He rescues us and welcomes us into his family, to his table That is something we've had to do without for many months, and even now we have to be constrained – although at last many of the Covid-19 restrictions are lifting, we are still limiting our gatherings, keeping

our distance and wearing masks, no handshakes, no hugs, no friendly huddles. And even now with the vaccinations helping to keep us safe, many are hesitant about returning.

However, that doesn't stop us from sharing what we've got. We have an active Food Bank locally and although collecting tins and packets here at St John's has had to stop, we can still pop items into the Food Bank containers in the supermarkets, or make donations direct (St Albans and District Food Bank, c/o 5 Browning Road, Harpenden, AL5 4TS).

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is for us today as well. He longed that we too ("all generations": v.21) should be strengthened with power through the Spirit of Christ, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love. And then he goes on: that we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge – in other words it's not just what goes on in our heads, our hearts need to be involved as well. Why does he pray this for us? So that we may be filled with all the fulness of God!

The five thousand had their physical hunger filled that day as they sat on the hillside listening to Jesus, and no doubt hoped to see more of the miracles they were hearing about. That was just a pin prick in time. Paul's prayer stretches out over the centuries, into eternity even. So, as we come together with the freshness of release from serious lockdown, let us find ways of living God's love with generosity and joy – our ideas, time, money, friendship – within the life of St John's as we look forward to Tim's coming and his ministry with us.

Prayers

Collect for this Sunday

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern
both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most holy protection, both here and ever,

we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and for ever.

Father God, our generous provider,
as the young boy offered all he had to Jesus –
five loaves and two small fish –
we come today offering you everything we have:
a pocketful of faith, a bit of time,
ourselves, our gifts, our talents.
And we know that,
however small our gift or offering,
you will do amazing things with it,
far more than we can ever hope, believe or imagine.
Thank you, awesome God. Amen.

Father God,
you forgive us when we make mistakes,
when we have not shared what you have given us.
We come to the cross knowing that
we are healed and forgiven,
and given a second change
to be the people you call us to be. Amen

Lord, hear our prayer,
and change our lives
until we illustrate the grace of God
who comes to make all things new. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Scottish Episcopal Church
Monday	The Diocese of Delaware – The Episcopal Church
Tuesday	The Diocese of Delhi – The (united) Church of North India
Wednesday	The Diocese of Derby – The Church of England

Thursday	The Diocese of Derry & Raphoe – The Church of Ireland
Friday	The Diocese of Dhaka – The (united) Church of Bangladesh
Saturday	The Diocese of San Diego – The Episcopal Church

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Little Berkhamsted (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Monday	Parish of Ponsbourne (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Tuesday	Parish of Stanstead Abbots (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Wednesday	Parish of Stapleford (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Thursday	Parish of Thundridge (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Friday	Parish of Ware (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Saturday	Parish of Ware, Christ Church (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Hadleigh Court, Hammondswick
Monday	Hatching Green, Hatching Green Close
Tuesday	Hawsley Road, Hawthorn Close
Wednesday	Heath Close, High Elms
Thursday	High Firs Crescent, Highfield Avenue
Friday	Kingcroft Road, Kings Court
Saturday	All those living outside the Parish

The Sick:

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris, Emma and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

On their year's mind:

Carol Bowden, Joyce Groom, James Peck, Maureen Cameron.

[A reminder... of this phone service:](#)

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.