

Sunday 1st August 2021

Reading: John 6 vv 24 – 35

Once the crowd realised that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

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

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

Then they asked him “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent.”

So they asked him “What miraculous sign will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’”

Jesus said to them: “I tell you the truth, 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. For the bread of God is he who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.”

“Sir” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”

Then Jesus answered, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Prayer:

*Merciful God. You have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass human understanding. Pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

Reflection:

John 6 v 2: you came looking, not because you saw signs, but because you ate bread and your hunger was satisfied.

Intro: A crematorium is a place of brief encounters. The nature of our society is such that for many people a funeral may well be the only contact they have with the church or one of its ministers. In the twenty minutes available there are quite specific needs to be met (with only one chance to get it right) but also a unique opportunity to proclaim the Christian message in a caring and compassionate manner. There are other brief encounters - with the minister who has officiated immediately before or who will officiate immediately afterwards. And these can be interesting and sometimes educational.

In one such encounter, over 40 years ago, a vicar spoke of the challenge of trying to offer an effective ministry to those who, while considering themselves Christian, limited their worship in the body of God's people to three occasions in their life – arriving in a pram, a limousine or a hearse.

One: Forty years on we may reflect on the ministry we are now picking up again after the restrictions of the pandemic, via Tookeys, or chapel prayers or the various organisations who use our building and in some way regard us as “Their church.”

As Jesus himself knew, there are few things more frustrating than trying to offer a vision of the Eternal to those who refuse to look beyond the most immediate triviality. The bible reflects this aspect of human nature and the frustration has been shared by many who have followed Jesus down the ages.

Again and again Jesus was to say to his closest followers “You really don't understand, do you?”

The way in which the Church has carried out its mission has varied from place to place and from time to time. In earlier times it was necessary to put much effort into caring for our own widows and orphans, the dispossessed and outcast for surrounding society. At other times and in other places the church has been a sanctuary for weary travellers or a hospital for the sick. Sometimes it has provided the enrichment that comes from a varied social life, or the education that might enable people to realise their potential. Always it has been a focus for worship, the point of contact between time and eternity.

Sadly, sometimes this essential focus has been crowded out by other things and even faithful members have been too satisfied with something less than the best.

Two: One of the most terrible sayings of Jesus is “Ask and you will receive.” Terrible because it is set beside others like “Do not be like those who put on a show – they get what they ask for.”

If we ask only for the superficial, then that is what we shall get. If our prayers are concerned solely with the immediate and the trivial then that is what we shall receive. Fortunately for us, the Lord sees beyond our words and gives what we need rather than what we want. But then we have the problem of knowing what to do with his unexpected gift.

When Jesus made that realistic, if cynical remark to those who came looking for him, he was only saying what his followers have often lacked the courage to say.

Three: “You came, not because you saw signs but because you ate and were satisfied.

When William Carey heard God's call to the mission field of India he was shouted down by the members of the Baptist assembly. Domestic detail crowded out a vision of what might be.

There were signs aplenty for the crowd to come to Jesus on the hillside that God was at work but they didn't notice. They remembered only a party on a hillside.

Conc: God is still at work and there are clear signs of his activity. Good news is proclaimed to the poor, Wholeness restored to broken and diseased bodies and minds. Mourners are comforted, the word of prophecy spoken to the powerful.

The promise remains “Ask and you will receive.” but of course it depends on what we ask for.

If we raise our eyes above the immediate the promise of life in all its fullness is there for us. That promise will be realised only if we are willing to receive what God freely offers.

The Communion

Let us pray:

Lord, we come, not trusting in ourselves but only in your son, our strength and saviour.

The Lord Jesus said "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Those who come to me I will never turn away.

On the night he was arrested he took bread and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you: do this that I may be remembered."

In the same way he took the cup after supper and said: "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood: whenever you drink it, do this that I may be remembered."

As Jesus took bread and a cup, we take bread and wine: and as he thanked God, let us do the same.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD.
GOD OF POWER AND MIGHT
HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF YOUR GLORY:
HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

Lord God, you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may have eternal life.

Remembering our Saviour's work, we make this memorial of him before you until he comes again. We ask you so to move us by your spirit that the bread we break may be a means of sharing in his body and the cup we drink, a means of sharing in his blood, that we, by faith may be made one with his body, flesh of his flesh, one with him and with each other in him that the world may know him in us and be served in him through us.

Our Father.....

Take this and eat:
This is his body which is for you.

The bread is shared.

Drink of this, all of you: this is his blood of the covenant, shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins

The cup is shared

With all our heart we rejoice that we and all who believe in Christ our Lord are made one in him. We give thanks for this fellowship and for those who have gone before us in the faith, who, though they are dead are alive for ever in Christ Jesus. Keep us loyal to him, so caring about all people that we may share life in his body now and his splendour hereafter.

Hymn

The peace of God, beyond our utmost understanding, keep guard over our hearts and thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Amen.