

**Service at Home for Sunday July 25<sup>th</sup> 2021**  
**prepared by Rev. Les Judd**

**Make yourself comfortable and read slowly the call to worship.**

I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory". (Isaiah 6:1-3)

**Hymn 6 StF**

Father, we love you,  
We worship and adore you:  
Glorify your name in all the earth  
glorify your name  
glorify your name  
glorify your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love you  
We worship and adore you:  
Glorify your name in all the earth  
glorify your name  
glorify your name  
glorify your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love you  
We worship and adore you:  
Glorify your name in all the earth  
glorify your name  
glorify your name  
glorify your name in all the earth.

Donna Adkins (1940-)  
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Prayer:

Lord of all life, the beginning and the end, provider of all we need, we praise you. You are the one who sustains us, the one who nourishes and strengthens us throughout our daily life. We offer you our praise and thanksgiving.

You are always there for us. When life's journey seems long and hard, you smooth our pathway. When we are hungry and thirsty, you are the bread of Life which sustains us. When we are weak and stressed, you are our staff upon which we lean. When our spirits are low and we feel unable to carry on, you comfort us with bread and wine. In each situation, you are there to revive us.

When we respond to your call and offer our hands in love and in service, you bless us. When life's challenges are great, you empower us. When the victory is won, we will see you face to face, and our praise will be unending.

Lord God you heap your love upon us, providing for every need. Forgive us when we treat your generosity as our right, or embrace it possessively. Forgive us that we keep what we have to ourselves rather than offering it up to you so that you might feed and sustain others. Forgive us that we have not been sufficiently concerned about the waste our society produces. Forgive us when we have wanted more for ourselves at the cost of others. We are sorry, Lord, and in need of your renewing grace. As we surrender to you in this act of worship, let us hear a fresh word of forgiveness and encouragement from you. Renew us, we pray, that we might share in your mission of giving and supporting life in your world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Hymn 462**

Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world

where strangers might smile or where stones may be hurled;  
Come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch  
and find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold much...

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools!*  
*Sing hey for the Pharisees leaving their rules!*  
*Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets!*  
*Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets!*

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side,  
come savour a lifestyle with nothing to hide;  
come sit at my table and eat with my friends,  
discovering that love which the world never ends.

Come share in my laughter, come close to my fears,  
come find yourself washed with the kiss of my tears;  
come stand close at hand while I suffer and die  
and find in three days how I never will lie.

come leave your possessions, come share out your treasure,  
come give and receive without method or measure;  
come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,  
enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.

John L Bell (1949-) & Graham Maule (1958-)  
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### **John 6: 1-21**

In this week's gospel there are two stories, both of them significant. The storm-tossed boat we will leave for another day. I will only deal with the first story, the feeding of the 5,000 people who came to listen to Jesus.

I have a problem. I confess that I find it hard to share what I've got. Now I know that some of you are saying, 'I don't believe it. He would give his last penny away.' You try me! I won't. My attitude is - I work hard to gain the few pennies I have and I don't want to squander them or give them away flippantly where they may be wasted or not get their full value. I hate being stopped in the street by a charity worker asking whether I could spend a few moments. Well, pennies and moments are expensive and not to be given away. I'm beginning to sound a lot like Scrooge but I am not really that bad. In 45 years of ministry I suspect I have been knowingly conned out of hundreds of pounds by story-tellers turning up on the manse doorstep in need. "My grand-mother, a poor wee thing she is, lives in a little cottage near John O Groats and she is dying. I have nae the fare to catch a train, padre, could you lend us a few bob. So I can be beside her at her passing?" Well who could refuse such a tale when there are real tears accompanying it? I have tried to operate on planned giving to charities. I have also allowed my heart-strings to be tugged by any world crisis of famine or disaster and have put my hand into my pocket and pulled out my cheque book.

I have of course, thanked God for being born in a place blessed with so much. I have never really wanted for anything. I live in a nice home, warmed in the winter with central heating, and cooled in the summer by flinging the windows open. I sit down to eat and there is always more than enough, that is why my doctor has said, according to this table you are just creeping into the slightly, ever so slightly over-weight category! Anyway what has this got to do with the gospel story? Well the gospel tells us something about God's liberal generosity and if we are willing to share in it, the whole world could be changed.

When everybody else was scratching their heads about food, Andrew said, 'here is a lad who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?' We don't know exactly what happened, but in John's gospel the text leaves us in no doubt that Jesus had only the lad's five loaves and two fish with which to work. He says a prayer, breaks the bread and distributes it. There is enough for everyone. The first lesson is, never underestimate what God can do.

However, if you have trouble in believing in such a miracle, though it is the only one recorded in all four gospels, we could deduce that people pulled out their lunch packets and it turned into a great act of sharing, an incredible open-air picnic. So the second lesson is, if we share what we have, it usually turns out that there is more than enough for all. We have witnessed it at every pot luck lunch or faith tea the church has. There is always more than enough. Yes, it is surprising what can happen if resources are shared.

Therefore, the feeding of the five thousand could have been a miraculous event initiated by Jesus' prayer causing the loaves to multiply; or the people felt moved to share what they had. Either way it is a miracle. We don't have to get into which is the greater miracle: a change of loaves or a change of heart. The feeding of the five thousand shows us how it could be with material resources. First dedicate it all to the Lord; by so doing we are recognising all that we have comes from our heavenly Father, and then we are free to see each other as one family sharing what we have.

John Wesley preached about the use of resources that come into our possession in his sermon on 'the Use of Money'. First he said, 'gain all you can', so long as it does not affect your own, or your neighbour's life or health. Yes, gain all you can by honest industry.

Having gained all you can by honest endeavour, then 'save all you can'. Do not be wasteful in the way you dispose of your money. Make sure that spending becomes a matter of prayer, so that none is wasted, and all has the blessing of God. The third rule Mr Wesley proposed is to 'give all you can', because God placed you here not as a proprietor but as a steward. It was not a statement in a sermon only; in his book keeping his first records show, Earnings £30, Expenses £28 Giving £2 but eventually it rose to Earnings £1,400 Expenses £30 Giving £1,400. In his will he left nothing but a community of faith, which is a global family of over 70 million people today.

Our world is vastly more complex than the one in which Jesus lived and the one in which Wesley preached, but it is still worth noting that we are called to be stewards not proprietors. In any case, what we may discover is that there is more than enough for all of us, if it is used wisely and shared. We may even find there is sufficient to spare. After the five thousand had satisfied their hunger on bread and fish, which had been blessed by Jesus, there were twelve full baskets left over.

Yet in the world in which we live, there are those who are in desperate need. There is more than enough to go round in terms of resources, but it is not shared. We are locked into an insane economic system that benefits some to the detriment of others. We can learn a lot from this gospel story.

I have a second problem! It's tied up with trusting. I think that I would be much more willing to be generous and look out for other people's interests, if I really felt someone was looking after my interests. In other words, I cannot see a solution to the larger problem, because I do not believe anyone genuinely cares for my economic welfare. I cannot go looking after the world, when no one will be looking after me. I am ashamed to say, I too easily forget God in Christ cares for my material welfare as well as my spiritual well-being. I need to trust more.

Jesus looks after the crowd but he also takes care of Philip. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this to test him. What kind of test was it? He already knew what he was going to do. Philip learns that he too is part of Jesus' plan of care. Does Jesus have a twinkle in his eye when he says to Philip, how are we going to feed this lot? Is he in effect saying, 'Don't worry, Philip, trust in me.'

Sometimes we may feel we are easily overlooked and dismissed. But a little incident like this can show us no one gets overlooked who is a friend of Jesus. Every little incident is woven into a whole, so that we become rounded and healed people. It may take a long while. We are slow learners. Yet Jesus generously includes us in, even if the world wants to push us out. That is what Paul is saying to the Ephesians 3:18. I want you to know the vastness of the love of God; its height, length, depth, and breadth. If we feel and experience these dimensions of love in our life then maybe we will all become secure enough to trust that even our meagre resources can be put at God's disposal and neither we or our resources will be diminished.

Perhaps, hidden in this story is the call for us to entrust ourselves to the call of Christ. He will honour, nurture and encourage us and use what we have, so that our little can be part of the big change the world needs to see.

**Prayers.**

**Sit quietly and bring to mind:**

each member of your family.

each member of your church who needs to be prayed for.

each member of the world-wide church keeping faith in difficult circumstances

**Pray for those who suffer from climate change disasters:**

from floods,

from fire

from famine

**Pray for those who suffer from relational difficulties.**

from abuse

from addiction

from loneliness.

**Pray for yourself**

For renewed faith,

For a greater desire to serve Christ,

For greater love for your neighbour,

For the willingness to allow God-directed change to occur moment by moment in your life.

The Lord's Prayer

**Hymn 588**

I come with joy, a child of God,  
forgiven, loved, and free;  
the life of Jesus to recall,  
in love laid down for me.

The Spirit of the risen Christ,  
unseen but ever near,  
is in such friendship better known,  
alive among us here.

I come with Christians far and near,  
to find, as all are fed,  
the new communion of love  
in Christ's communion bread.

Together met, together bound  
by all that God has done,  
we'll go with joy, to give the world  
the love that makes us one.

As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,  
each proud division ends.  
the love that made us, makes us one,  
and strangers now are friends.

Brian Wren (1936-)  
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**Blessing.**

Bless us Lord with the knowledge that small as we are, your love surrounds us.

Bless us Lord with the knowledge that small as our faith is, it can grow and produce much fruit.

Bless us Lord with the knowledge that small as our song is, it can become a hymn of praise.

Bless us Lord with the knowledge that small as our fellowship is, we are yours and we are part of a large family.

Thank you Lord.