



Call: There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is above all, through all and in all.

Prayer: Holy and blessed God, you uphold those who are falling and raise up those who are bowed down. In our weakness and weariness we come into your house.

Lift our eyes and broaden our horizons that we may set our minds on you, in the peace and joy of your presence, and worship you with glad and reverent hearts; through Christ our Lord. AMEN

Hymn: STF 82 O Lord my God <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0QVWzCv9k>

O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

Refrain

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die-I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home-what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!
Refrain

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Prayer of Adoration: Holy God, we come to worship you the one and only. You are the king of heaven, king above all kings. Your majesty rules over all. Your splendour is brighter than the sun, higher than the tallest mountain, deeper than any ocean. Your power raises the dead and heals the sick. Slow to anger, and full of compassion, you offer your love to all. You invite us to call you Father, you welcome us as your children. Only a Holy God. **AMEN**

Psalm 145:8-9 14-21

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

Prayer of Confession: Lord Jesus, we confess that we often put our own needs first. Burdened with our own problems and anxieties, we withdraw within ourselves.

We fail to notice that others carry burdens too, or selfishly fail to respond even if we do.

Yet you, Lord, are ever open to our needs – you provide food for us, physical and spiritual. You lift us up when we are bowed down. You stretch out your hands to help those in need.

Forgive us our failings to act, and our acts that result in failings.

The psalmist tells us, “the Lord upholds all those who are falling, and raise up all who are bowed down.”

Father we thank you for your saving grace. We thank you for your assurance of forgiveness. We thank you that you never fail us, that you are always forgiving and nurturing. In your name we pray. **AMEN**

Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Song: With a prayer you fed the hungry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvCpUb9obHQ>

With a prayer You fed the hungry,
With a cry You stilled the storm;
With a look You had compassion
On the desperate and forlorn.
With a touch You healed the leper,
With a shout You raised the dead;
With a word expelled the demons,
With a blessing broke the bread.
*Love incarnate, love divine,
Captive this heart of mine
Till all I do speaks of You.*

As a sheep before the shearer
You were silent in Your pain;
You endured humiliation

At the hands of those You'd made.
And as hell unleashed its fury
You were lifted on a tree,
Crying 'Father God, forgive them,
Place their punishment on Me.'

I will feed the poor and hungry,
I will stand up for the truth;
I will take my cross and follow
To the corners of the earth.
And I ask that You so fill me
With Your peace, Your power, Your breath,
That I never love my life so much
To shrink from facing death.

Stuart Townend (born 1963)

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Message:

Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions.

Is this what Jesus would say?

It was what we sometimes said at team meetings at work – the thought behind it, is “don't come and moan about the problems without making suggestions of how to solve them.” It's a tough message, but encourages individual participation within a team effort.

So I think, yes, this is perhaps what Jesus was saying but perhaps not quite in those terms.

The problem – 5000 people, and that was just the men. If you added in the women and children there could have been nearer 15000 people.

They had travelled from far and wide, after learning that Jesus, this man who heals the sick was on the east shore of the sea of Galilee.

If we take this story literally, they must have travelled quickly and come unprepared because no-one except one small boy had any food.

The disciples, had compassion on the people, just as Jesus had compassion on the people.

The disciples recognised that it was late in the day and the people were likely to be hungry.

Jesus was tired, he'd experienced rejection and criticism in his home-town, and on top of that he had learnt of the death of his cousin John, in a most gruesome way. He wanted the solitude and quiet away from the hustle and bustle and so had sailed across the sea of Galilee to the quieter eastern shore. But instead of time for himself, he was faced with a multitude of people.

His reaction was selfless, he put aside his grief and ministered to the people, healing those who were sick. This must have cost him a lot, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

How would we have reacted?

The disciples, having recognised the problem, came to Jesus, only with the problem, not with any possible solution. Yes they had compassion on the people, but were they also worried about crowd control – was that part of their risk assessment?

The people needed food, but where to get it?

The disciples had come up with a problem but were unable to focus in on a solution. Their intention was on target – let's feed these people before their stomachs all start rumbling.

And Jesus responds to them, as he often does, in a completely unexpected way.

He throws the problem back at them and seemingly asks them to do the impossible – “you feed them, all 5000 or 15000.”

“Impossible,” they say. “All we have are these 5 loaves and 2 fish.”

And again, he responds in an unexpected way. Rather than saying, well that's not enough for 5 people let alone 5000, Jesus takes all that they offer, and in his hands it becomes more than enough for 5, 5000 even 15000, and more!

In the boys hands, it was simply his packed lunch, but after he has given it to Jesus it becomes a feast.

It is through Jesus that the miracle has happened. It is after Jesus has taken that bread and those fish, given thanks for them and broken them that everyone is fed.

It is through Jesus that miracles can happen.

How often do we today come up with a problem? How do we get more people into church? How do we witness to the community? How do we combat Climate Change? There will be many many more problems that you can probably think of.

We may have our ideas of what we think is needed, or perhaps what the problem is, but cannot work out the solution. We may think the problem is too big for us to deal with.

However all that is needed is for us to offer God what we have, however small or insignificant it is. We may, wrongly, assume what we have is of no use, or too small, or not what is needed, but in God's hands our small can be multiplied, so that all have more than enough.

God has compassion on us, he recognises our needs and provides. Through God nothing can become more than enough.

And God in turn, uses us as small and as insignificant as we may feel we are, and multiples beyond our imagination.

Those disciples, were Jesus' closest friends. They had a desire to help – in a very practical way.

We too may be followers of Jesus, and have a desire to serve in many different ways, often in practical ways. Jesus takes our desire to serve, and rather than simply answer us in the way we would expect, or prefer. “Yes go ahead do what you suggest,” he turns that desire inside out and challenges us. “You've outlined the problem, what have YOU got to solve it?”

If we offer whatever we can, however small or inadequate we feel it is, even if we don't understand how it can be used, then God will accept whatever we offer, he will bless it and break it. God will make whatever we offer ready to be used.

What is also remarkable, is that after Jesus took the 5 loaves and two fish, blessed them and broke them, he gave them back to the disciples. “Here you are, now feed the people.” One man could not have got round 5000 people, there was a team of them, at least twelve to carry the baskets of leftovers.

Jesus performed the miracle.

The Psalmist tells us that God lifts us up, he is the source of our daily needs, he remains near to those who call on him and he hears our cries and saves us. God provides, but he gives to us to give to others.

God will take what we offer, he will bless it and break it, but he will give it back to us to distribute to those in need.

God provides for us, more than enough for everyone, we are to distribute, to go out and share with others.

Poem: Mary Oliver “Logos”

Why worry about the loaves and fishes? If you say the right words, the wine expands.

If you say them with love and the felt ferocity of that love

and the felt necessity of that love, the fish explode into many.

Imagine him, speaking, and don't worry about what is reality,

or what is plain, or what is mysterious. If you were there, it was all those things.

If you can imagine it, it is all those things.

Eat, drink, be happy. Accept the miracle.

Accept, too, each spoken word, spoken with love.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, so often we focus on problems and don't attempt to find solutions. Help us to be courageous enough to step out in faith, to offer our money, our time and our talents, even though we may think them inadequate for the task. Help us to trust in your provision for us, so that our small offerings become more than enough. May we be willing whether we are young or old, man or woman, to be part of your team feeding those in need with the food that you have blessed and broken ready for use in your Kingdom. *AMEN*

Hymn : STF 611 Brother, sister let me serve you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQaOErUUjm8>

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christlight for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too.

Richard Gillard (born 1953)

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Blessing: Loving God, thank you for using our small contributions. Help us not to doubt that each of us has something to offer, and that, when we trustfully offer it to you, you do amazing things for us, among us, and through us. In the name of Jesus Christ, *AMEN*