

# A month of Sundays – August 2021

# Worship

Preston Ribble Circuit

Ministry Team

# Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021

## Call to Worship:

Jesus, you call us today to be your disciples with renewed energy and faith. Let us gather together in heart, mind and love to experience your Gospel. May your words fill our hearts and burn within us. Let us be filled with hope and bring joy to those who are in need of your prayer.

**Hymn: STF 578** “Bread of life truth eternal.”

## Prayer and Lord’s Prayer:

Lord, Holy Creator, who gives creation as a graceful gift and donates life to all within it, who holds creation in care and love, and not with domination, who creates each second from nothing and impregnates it with grace, grant that we may see the holiness of each moment and respond to it in love. Amen

As creation hints at your goodness and beauty, let us glimpse you beyond it; let us live in thanks and be as holy custodians of all you have given. Amen.

Lord of hope, fill us with confidence to look to the future with new eyes and open hearts responding to your call and what you are really asking us to do. May we become a church community that is ever more responsive to the needs of others and is always listening and willing to share the living bread and working to build your kingdom. Amen

Gracious God, you transform our lives in so many different ways. You look upon us and let your face shine upon us with your mercy. You invite us to an ever-closer relationship with you. May we be gracious too in answering that call Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer:** Our Father who art in heaven .....

## **1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Exodus 16:2-4 and 9-16**

“It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: John 6:24-35**

“I am the bread of life.”

**Hymn STF 585:** “God whose love is all around us”

### **Reflection:** (Simon Skidmore)

In the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus was having another of his window-rattling conversations about “manna from heaven.” In Jesus’ day, manna was a reminder of a specific time in the history of the nation of Israel. Just say “manna” and his listeners were transported back thirteen hundred years to Israel’s forty-year exile in the wilderness. Each day there in the wilderness, God fed the Israelites with manna (bread from heaven). This heavenly bread was such a big deal that they made a point of celebrating it every year during the Passover meal.

Jesus masterfully used this discussion about bread to teach them that, even though thirteen hundred years had passed and they had settled the Promised Land, founded a nation, constructed a capital, and built a glorious temple, life still felt like exile in the wilderness, and people were still hungry for bread and famished for God.

Today, more than two thousand years later, we’re still starving.

We have a whole television network dedicated to food, with expert cooking instructions, celebrity chefs, and cutthroat cooking competitions. Yet we are a culture that is starving.

The spiritual poverty of the Western World is much greater than the physical poverty of many people. Here in the West, we

have millions of people who suffer such terrible loneliness and emptiness. They feel unloved and unwanted. These people are not hungry in the physical sense, but they are in another way. They know they need something more than money, yet they don't know what it is. How can we help others to overcome their spiritual poverty and regain a sense of community and banish isolation?

What they are missing, really, is a living relationship with God.

The only path to satisfying our unrelenting hunger is to walk every step with Jesus and do exactly what he tells us to do.

## **Intercessions:**

Lord, at a time when many people question the relevance of the Church, give us the presence to be witnesses in the world.

Witnesses that strengthen the presence of Christ in our communities. Help us to be the answer to those questions of relevance by what we do and what we are known for. Amen.

Lord, make us a welcoming body of Christ here in the Methodist Churches throughout Preston, so people think about the real church, the people of God who worship here. Amen.

Lord, please look after all the people in your church throughout the world, especially those who live in areas where it is hard to be a Christian. We thank you for all those who spend their lives helping others to find you. Amen.

Lord we pray for those in our church communities across Preston who are experiencing illness, and those who have experienced loss or recent distress. Send them comfort and healing and help those to feel your presence is near them. Amen

Lord we remember those who have not been able to experience the bread of life which you offer. We pray especially for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice. May they

be filled with your love and compassion to continue to serve others. Amen.

## **Hymn: STF 495:**

“Dear Lord and Father of Mankind”

## **Blessing:**

May the love of God be with you and near you at all times in the week ahead. May you be filled with his spirit and be a witness to his love and compassion sharing the good news about the bread of life which you want us all to share in. Amen

# **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

## **Call to worship**

When we journey with God, anything is possible:

**we are challenged to push our limits.**

When we walk closely with Jesus, anything is possible:

**we are reminded that everyone has their own story to tell.**

When we welcome the Holy Spirit, anything is possible:

**we are invited to share in the bread of heaven that always satisfies.**

## **Prayer**

Lord God, you have the bread of life for the hungry and living water for the thirsty.

We come hungry and thirsty for your word,  
with a desire to know your will  
and to love with your unconditional love.

Help us to be fed and to learn from you.

**Amen.**

Limitless God,

thank you that we cannot contain you,

that you are unfathomable and always up to something!

We worship and adore you.

Just when we think we have worked it all out, you surprise us!

Gracious God, we are truly blessed by you.

Thank you, that as we bow down humbly at your throne,

we know that only you can satisfy our needs.

Praise you, Lord God.

**Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

## **Reading**

John 6:35, 45-51

## **Reflection** Carolyn Hothersall

I'm sure we weren't the only family growing up who didn't snack between meals. So, by the time we ate, we were hungry, and rarely left anything on our plates. But there would also be a stack of bread and butter at the table which we were encouraged to eat to 'fill us up.'

In our reading we heard Jesus tell those he was speaking to that he is the bread of life, and that through him people would never be hungry. Whenever I read that passage, I always think of the plate of bread and butter on the table at home, there to fill us up, to stop us being hungry before the next meal.

But Jesus said something more than just not being hungry until the next meal. Come to me and you will *never* be hungry. Never. That's quite a statement! Of course, we all know that Jesus was referring to spiritual nourishment, but none-the-less

that's a dramatic concept. Just as we might head for the bread-bin when we're feeling hungry, do we immerse ourselves in our relationship with Jesus when we're feeling spiritually malnourished?

And yet not all those who heard Jesus's words on that day responded with the same hunger. When the Jewish leaders who had been listening to Jesus asked, 'Who does he think he is?', they had conveniently forgotten that their own history was full of unlikely people, chosen and empowered by God to do God's work. Their assumptions about the nature of the long-awaited Messiah prevented them from recognising him when he came. Who had they been expecting? God chooses those who appear the least likely to do the job on their own, testing our faith in him and in ourselves.

Yet we are quick to limit ourselves and others. We all live within the constraints of our assumptions, quickly judging people and situations on very little evidence or experience. I wonder if you would have recognised Jesus in his earthly ministry as being the Messiah, the 'bread of life'? Do we recognise him today? Do we allow others to be God's messengers to us today? Do we see Jesus in the lives of his unlikely disciples, and is he recognisable in ourselves?

Jesus referred his listeners back to the manna that God had provided from heaven, and which came daily to feed their physical needs. The bread of life that Jesus offers is to be enough for each day, but it is also part of the long-term diet plan that builds us up and sustains us for the journey of eternal life. Like the plate of bread to fill us up which was part of every meal as I grew up. Are we filling up on the bread of life offered freely to each of us? Are we open to being used as the messengers for God, feeding others through the ways in which share the Good News of Jesus?

Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Bread,  
the Bread of Life for the world am I.  
The Bread of Life for the world am I,  
the Bread of Life for the world am I.  
Jesus the Lord said: 'I am the Bread,  
The Bread of Life for the world am I.'

## **Prayer**

We recognize we are often caught up in so much busyness that we don't always make time to meet you in simplicity and stillness. We make space for our prayers for your world. Thinking about the news which has filled our headlines, we pray for those people we have seen on our screens or read about this week, and we hold them in your love.

We know so many who are struggling with health, big decisions, crises or major changes in life. We know you care for them more deeply than we do, but we show our concern as we name them before you in quiet trust.

There are many things which we have on our minds, things we may not have shared with anyone else. But you understand us and want only the best for us. We pray to you in the honesty of our hearts.

We ask that you will take each of our prayers and answer them in your own time and in your own way, giving us expectant and trustful hearts.

**Amen**

## **Blessing**

Thank you, Lord, for believing in us,  
for seeing beyond our outside  
and knowing who we really are inside.

Thank you for giving us all we need to do your work,  
even when others may tell us we are 'only'.

Thank you, Lord, for calling us to be adverts for you,  
so that others can see that you also believe in them.

**Amen.**

## **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

### **Call to worship**

As we come to worship, are we hungry for God  
or satisfied by all the comforts of our life?

As we hear God's word, do we want to be fed  
or have we had enough?

Jesus invites us to feast with him:

let us come, for all is ready.

### **Opening Prayer**

O God, your Word became flesh and lived among us.

Thank you that you moved into our neighbourhood,

that you are present with us right now,

dwelling in our hearts and our homes.

Holy God, you are worthy to be praised.

Holy Spirit, we worship you.

Living bread, we adore you. **Amen.**

Lord, when we are not as hospitable as you were,

**forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

When we drain life out of people rather than be life giving,

**forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

When we damage relationships rather than repair them,

**forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

When we seek 'self' first and don't share who we are,

**forgive us, Lord, we pray.**

Make us whole, Lord. **Make us whole today. Amen.**

# **Bible reading**

**John 6:51-58**

## **Reflection** (Rev Karen Le Mouton)

There are some things in the Bible, and at the centre of our faith, that are difficult to grasp and even harder to communicate. John 6 is one of them. Jesus links the bread he gives with his flesh and asserts that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life. How can I talk about this in a way that we will understand? Well let's give it a go... nothing ventured, nothing gained so they say!

When I was undertaking a distance learning course through Birmingham University, I had to attend some residential weekends. As the flights to and from the Channel Islands never seemed to coincide with the start or finish of the course, I would inevitably find myself wandering round areas of Birmingham. I don't know how some people could cope with living or working in the area of Bourneville as the smell of melted chocolate was overwhelming and always started my tummy rumbling and subsequently searching for the nearest shop to buy some chocolate!

Whatever your dietary preferences, there are certain smells that just make you hungry. I wonder is it fish and chips? Maybe grilled bacon? Then of course there is always freshly baked bread, or the smell of freshly ground coffee! However, as we all know, the inviting smells may not be related to nutritional value, just as we know that party snacks or fast food do not always make for a healthy meal, however tempting they may be! We all have a personal relationship with food!

Jesus says he is living bread – what is our relationship with him? How often do we feed on his word, drink in his life? There will be times when we snack elsewhere, (listening to podcasts, or reading sermons, commentaries and reflections from other people) but Jesus invites us to share with him something that is more sustaining. I guess you could liken this to reading all about all the appropriate diving equipment and how to dive safely and correctly, but never taking the plunge and learning to dive yourself and building your own experience of diving.

How is your appetite? And how do you nourish it?

Turn to Jesus now and simply ask that you could feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving. You will be satisfied at the time, and yet each day we need food and drink throughout the day. So, remember to nourish yourself on Jesus regularly throughout the day and I can assure you, you will always seek more of the banquet that is provided!

## Prayers

We pray for people who struggle with their lives;  
for those for whom the chips are down  
and everything feels like an uphill struggle.  
We pray for all whose lives have been affected by tragedy.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for lawmakers and peacekeepers,  
as they seek to make the world a better place;  
for police, as they deal with challenging situations...

We pray for the work of hospices,  
as they seek to bring a good end to life;  
for staff in care and nursing homes,  
who have the responsibility of looking after people  
who are no longer able to care for themselves...

We pray for parents nurturing children;  
for teachers;  
and for the church's role in the nurture  
of the physically young and the spiritually young...

We pray for people living with addictions;  
for organisations that seek  
to help them in their search for wholeness,  
and to bring normality back to their lives...

We pray for ourselves,  
that we will make the most of our God-given time,  
and that we will live well and be thankful...

Close your prayers by saying the Lord's Prayer.

**StF 587** I am the bread, the bread of life;  
who comes to me will never hunger.  
I am the bread, the bread of heaven;  
who feeds on me will never die.

*And as you eat, remember me  
my body broken on the tree:  
my life was given to set you free,  
and I'm alive forevermore.*

I am the vine, the living vine;  
apart from me you can do nothing.  
I am the vine, the real vine:  
abide in me and I in you.

So eat this bread and drink this wine,  
and as you do, receive this life of mine.  
All that I am I give to you,  
that you may live forevermore.

*Brian Hoare (b.1935)*

## **Blessing**

After being fed by you, Jesus the living bread,  
send us out to feed others.

Now that we are filled with your Holy Spirit,  
guide our hands as we offer your life to others.

Now that we have the promise of eternal life with you, Lord  
God,  
give us your love to share with the world. **Amen.**

## **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021**

### **Call to worship**

Let us worship the Lord: **he is great and mighty!**

Let us sing his praise:

Let us serve him in sincerity and faithfulness:

He rides on the wings of the wind:

He holds us in the palm of his hand:

Be strong in the Lord, **and in the strength of his power.**

Psalm 28 v. 7 says: The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.

My heart leaps for joy,  
and with my song I praise him.

### **Prayer**

Loving God, giver of life;  
Lord Jesus, friend and Saviour;  
Holy Spirit, guide and comforter –  
we worship and adore you.

We come today,  
not having or expecting all the answers  
but knowing that you are the way.

Thank you, Lord, for your unfailing love.  
Thank you that even with all our doubts and fears  
and worries about the journey ahead,  
you are there by our side.  
Where else can we turn? To whom shall we go?  
Thank you that you are our rock and our salvation,  
our strength and our high tower.  
Thank you that as we choose to go on this journey with you,  
as we make decisions and plans,  
you are there, gently leading and guiding, always present.  
Praise you, Lord, for your constant love and  
faithfulness. **Amen.**

**Bible reading:** Ephesians 6: 10 – 20

**Reflection** (by Rev Janet)

When I was a little girl, one of my favourite pastimes was playing with my cut-out paper dolls. They were on the back of my comics, and every week there would be a paper doll with a variety of clothes, which fitted on to the doll with tags. My dolls had lots of different outfits. Sometimes there would be sports kit, uniforms, wedding dresses or party clothes. I spent many happy hours dressing the dolls up in the appropriate clothing for various imaginary occasions and activities.

My Dad was a very patient man, who would spend hours neatly cutting my dolls' clothes out for me. He was also a Sunday School teacher, and he was inspired by my paper dolls to make a paper cut-out Roman soldier, for whom he made miniature cardboard armour. He would use it to illustrate this Bible passage for his Sunday School class. The children would dress the soldier would be in his tunic, breastplate, belt, sandals and helmet, while the passage from Ephesians was read. Finally his sword and shield were placed in his hands, and the soldier was ready for anything that might come his way in the day that lay ahead.

St Paul wants every Christian to be fully equipped and ready for anything that might come our way. Daily life can throw up all kinds of surprises and problems when we least expect them. A telephone call or letter, an item on the TV news, a visit from a friend or neighbour, can turn our lives upside down in a moment.

We are not knights in armour, likely to meet a dragon or monster, or to be involved in a sword fight when we pop to the shops! But we do still meet with danger – spiritual danger – every day. There is so much in life that tempts us to do wrong. To get angry or jealous; to do things that will harm other people or ourselves; to treat other people unfairly or without love.

We need to be prepared, or as Paul puts it, to put on the armour of God so that we do not fall into temptation or sin. So this day and every day, put on peace, truth, a determination to do the right thing. Above all have that trust and faith in the power of God to keep you in his love and grace. God has provided us with the gospel armour, the good news of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. So put it on: put it on today with prayer. Let us join in the words of St Patrick's daily prayer:

*I bind unto myself today  
the strong name of the Trinity  
by invocation of the same,  
the Three in One and One in Three.*

*I bind unto myself today  
the power of God to hold and lead,  
God's eye to watch, God's might to stay,  
God's ear to hearken to my need,  
the wisdom of my God to teach,  
God's hand to guide, God's shield to ward,  
the word of God to give me speech,  
God's heavenly host to be my guard.*

## **Intercessions**

O God, who answers prayer,  
we hear the words of Paul the apostle.  
He encourages us to pray on all occasions  
and with all kinds of prayers and requests.

We pray for communities that have seen tragedy.  
For vulnerable people who struggle to face what life throws at  
them.  
May they be built up in your love and strength.

We pray for people who suffer for their faith.  
For ministers and evangelists who seek to spread your word.  
For us all as we share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
May they, and may we, be built up in your love and strength.

We pray for people who feel bound by chains of unemployment  
and poverty; chains of disability or illness; chains of sorrow.

We pray for ourselves when we feel vulnerable.  
May they, and may we, be built up in your love and strength.

Lord, we pray in your Spirit. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer:** Our Father...

**Hymn** – Stand up stand up for Jesus

Stand up! stand up for Jesus,  
ye soldiers of the cross;  
Lift high His royal banner,  
it must not suffer loss.  
From victory unto victory  
His army He shall lead,

'til every foe is vanquished,  
and Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus,  
stand in His strength alone;  
The arm of flesh will fail you,  
ye dare not trust your own:  
Put on the gospel armour,  
each piece put on with prayer;  
where duty calls, or danger,  
be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,  
the strife will not be long;  
This day the noise of battle,  
the next the victor's song.  
to all that overcometh  
a crown of life shall be;  
They with the King of glory  
shall reign eternally.

## **Blessing**

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

# Outside, inside: Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August

## Call to Worship:

In this service may we bring to God not only our lips, but the praise of our hearts. May we bring our honesty and bravery, our anxiety and fears, all that we carry in our hearts. May we meet with Jesus who accepts us with forgiveness and grace. Amen.

## Hymn:

Love divine all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come  
down  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all they faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

## Prayers:

Father of light, Father of truth and wisdom, we worship you and adore you. Turn us inside out as we bow at your throne today. Let our light shine through you in the darkness, most merciful and gracious God. Amen.

Unblemished God, forgive us when we adhere to laws that are not of you, when we criticise others because their ways are not our ways. Cleanse our hearts and make us pure.

When we have not supported one another in love or protected those that are vulnerable. Cleanse our hearts and make us pure.

Help us to live as one community, bound together in love and grace.

Thankyou O God, that we are a forgiven people, cleansed and restored by you, made pure in your image. Today we are free because of the cross. Amen.

## **The Lords' Prayer**

**Reading:** Mark 7v1-15

**Reflection:** (Rev Barbara Pettitt)

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding onto the traditions of people. Mark 7v8

When I was a child we had a number of rituals that just seemed normal to us. On Christmas day, for example, we always had boiled bacon sandwiches for breakfast. My dad believed breakfast to be the most important meal of the day. So we were not allowed to skip it even for Christmas. But he knew we needed to open our stockings as well. So we ate those sandwiches as we opened our stockings. I wonder if you had or have similar rituals at special times of the year? To this day the smell of boiled bacon transports me back to those cold Christmas mornings.

In this passage of scripture Jesus is challenging the Pharisees about their rituals around eating and drinking. Not because the rituals themselves were wrong. Rather the rituals had become more important than the commands of God. So they had these elaborate rituals, washing pots and pans, and plates and their hands, and yet had abandoned Gods' command to honour their father and mother.

Rituals are important to us in our faith life and in our wider life. The rituals of prayer and worship, fellowship and communion are the framework on which we nurture our faith

and grow as disciples of Jesus, but those rituals must never become a substitute for obeying Gods' instructions to us. What is the point of our worship and prayer, our taking of bread and wine if we do not also do justice and love mercy?

When we make a cup of tea many of us use teabags and a mug. But sometimes in a café you get a pot of tea, with milk jug and sugar bowl. The ritual of pouring the milk and adding the tea as we sit at the table is a slower ritual than simply popping a teabag in a mug. Knowing Jesus and learning to live as his disciples should change us and inform the way we live. We need to slow down sometimes, we need to take time to learn from one another, to support one another in our Christian values.

Our traditions and our rituals are good, they remind us where we have come from, they are the building blocks of our faith but they must never stop us obeying Gods' commands.

Loving God every day give us courage to look and listen, the ability to notice, the determination to help and the compassion of Jesus. Amen.

## **Hymn:**

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

## **A sending out prayer:**

Lord, go with us into our everyday lives, to honour you in all we do and say. May our being and doing reflect your love and grace. May we recognize the prompting of the Holy Spirit day by day. Amen.