



Readers' Service

'Not By Bread Alone'

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'NOT BY BREAD ALONE'

ORDER OF SERVICE

Call to Worship:

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst'.

Let us praise God as we sing Hymn: HP 22 - 'Give to our God immortal praise'.

Please turn to the Psalm at number 884 in the hymn book. Let us share in reading verses 1 - 12, Leader and Congregation alternately.

Prayer:

Now let us pray

Almighty God, the Lord and the Giver of Life,
we offer our praise as we acknowledge your greatness and goodness.
We rejoice in your surrounding loving kindness
which has followed us all our days
and brought us to this present time and place.

We praise you for Jesus
who robed himself in our flesh and blood,
becoming a man among men and women and boys and girls,
and who by his life has shown us what all human life can be.
We praise you for his ministry of preaching, teaching and caring;
for his obedience to your will even to the point of death;
for his resurrection witnessing for all time
the triumph of the eternal values of goodness, beauty, truth and love.

We praise you for the church of Jesus in which we cherish our place,
that company of people, here and throughout the world,
into which you, by your grace, have gathered us.
We thank you for the joys of worship and fellowship and service.
We thank you for all who are linked with us in fellowship today,
enriching our lives by theirs,
and for all who have died in the faith,
and who, by the quality of their lives, have inspired us and encouraged us and have
shown us something of the truth as it is in Christ.

For all this we praise you and bring you our thanks.

We acknowledge that often we are neither the people you want us to be,
nor the people which, in our finer moments, we ourselves wish to be.
We fail both as individuals and as a church community

because the self-centredness which marks each of us
we allow to mar our common life.

The love we profess with our lips is often absent from our lives;
the faith we confess sometimes becomes a shell of religiosity,
and the good news you have called us to show forth to the world is hidden.

Forgive us, we pray,
and help us now to open our lives afresh to your Spirit
that we may be renewed in our discipleship.

We ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our next Hymn: HP 653 - 'God is here!'

Notices and Offering:

We shall now listen to the Announcements after which we shall make our Offering.

The Offertory Prayer:

Accept, Lord, the gifts of your people
and use them in your work,
for the upbuilding in faith of this community,
and, through this community the extension of your kingdom
in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls. Amen

We now turn once again to the word of God.

First Lesson:

The Old Testament passage is EXODUS 16: 1-5 and 9-15. It speaks of, 'Bread in the Wilderness'.

Second Lesson:

The New Testament reading is about the miraculous feeding of the multitude in St John's Gospel 6: 1-14 and 26-27.

We now sing Hymn: HP 467 - 'Break thou the bread of life, O Lord to me'.

SERMON (SEE ATTACHED SHEETS)

Let us respond to this word of God as we sing Hymn: HP 258 - 'Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts'.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession:

Let us pray

Let us thank God for Jesus, the Bread of Life, who feeds us freely, satisfying the hunger of the spirit and quenching the thirst of the soul.

Let us, in silence, reflect for a few moments on those times in recent days or in past months, when in various ways, perhaps not least through the hands and minds of other people, Christ has met our needs, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual - and let us thank God.....

And now let us pray for others.

At the words LORD IN YOUR MERCY, please respond **HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

First, for those who need food. Let us pray that in obedience to Christ, there may be expressed a generous mind amongst materially wealthy people to share the gifts of God's providence, for the benefit of all.

**LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

Secondly, for those who hunger and thirst for love, friendship, acceptance, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and those who long for freedom and democracy.

Let us pray that God will show us as individuals, and as a church community, how we may be channels of God's life-giving nourishment to all such within our reach.

**LORD IN YOUR MERCY
HEAR OUR PRAYER.**

Thirdly, for our church, and for the whole church of Christ, that we may hunger and thirst after righteousness, longing for renewal by God's Spirit, craving for joy and peace, compassion and love, that we may become more and more the people God can use through whom to bring the Bread of Life to mankind.

Father of Jesus Christ,
the Bread of Life
broken to keep the world alive;
having called us to be his 'body'
keep feeding us with your truth,
keep filling us with your power
so that,
as we ourselves are fed.
We may feed our neighbours
in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(From New Prayers for Worship)

Now let us say the Lord's Prayer together.....

Our final Hymn: HP 813 - 'Come, ye faithful, raise the anthem'.

The Blessing:

Unto God's mercy and protection we commit ourselves.

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace, both now and evermore.

Amen. (From Numbers 6:24-26)

SERMON

Our text is from St John's Gospel chapter 6 and verse 27, where Jesus says, 'Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you', and from St Matthew's Gospel chapter 4 and verse 4, where he says, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'.

Mahomet once said, 'If thou hast two loaves, sell one of them and buy some flowers of the narcissus'. That saying recognises that things spiritual are as important as things material.

Long before Mahomet was led to this truth Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'. Jesus never considered the material to be unimportant: it was he who saw that hungry people were fed and that physical needs were met. But he realised the significance of spiritual values, too.

Let us consider some aspects of the relationship between the material and the spiritual.

1. Firstly, THE MATERIAL IS NEVER MERELY MATERIAL.

Have you watched a girl newly engaged to be married, quietly looking at her new diamond ring? Somehow or other she always manages to keep the third finger of her left hand in her view! And perhaps in other people's view as well!

Now we could describe that diamond in cold scientific terms. As someone has said, 'A diamond is a form of crystallized carbon in which every carbon atom is symmetrically surrounded by four other carbon atoms arranged at the corners of a tetrahedron in such manner that the whole crystal is one continuous molecule'.

That, by scientific definition, is a diamond. I hope you have grasped it!

But that is not what the diamond is to the newly engaged. She sees in it more than a scientific definition. She sees in it a sacrament and a symbol of a man's love for her. The material is there, very beautiful and magnificent in its splendour, but it is the spiritual that is supremely real for her, namely the love that the ring symbolises.

God's gifts are displayed before us whenever we meet for worship: flowers to add beauty to our church, at the appropriate season the produce of field and orchard and garden, and in addition the font, the pulpit, the cross, the bread and wine. But we discern something greater than the gifts: we discern the Giver.

Material things loom large but the spiritual reality of God looms larger. The gifts are the sacraments and symbols of his love. Without him they are like the diamond ring without the love it represents and expresses.

Charles Wesley wrote:

'Thy gifts alone cannot suffice
Unless Thyself be given'.

Not everyone will properly acknowledge the significance of the spiritual dimension. Many learned people omit it from their reasonings.

Spiritual values are denied because they cannot be demonstrated in the test-tube or measured in the balance. They cannot be proved in a theorem or set out in an equation. And for some these are the only proofs of reality.

Yet the cold and calculating mathematician falls in love, the reasoning scientist dotes on his children, the masses acknowledge the place of honour, truth, justice, beauty, goodness, compassion and love.

These are the things of the spirit and because God is Spirit (John 4:24) they are the things of God.

These are the things without which, though a person has an abundance of the material, the soul shrivels and dies.

So Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'.

2. Secondly, CONSIDER THE LIMITATIONS OF MATERIAL THINGS: THE MORE ONE OBTAINS THE LESS THERE IS FOR ANOTHER.

If someone is in a condition of superfluity another is in a state of necessity. You cannot take constantly from the store of material things without diminishing the stock that remains. The greater the number who partake the less each receives.

Let selfishness take a hand, let greed and arrogance get the upper hand then injustice abounds. All because material things are limited.

3. But thirdly, CONSIDER THE BOUNDLESSNESS OF SPIRITUAL THINGS: THE MORE ONE HAS THE MORE ANOTHER WILL POSSESS.

Spiritual values will not allow of any kind of measurement.

Who can measure beauty? A Turner sunset might be measured in terms of so many grammes of pigments in so many cubic centimetres of oil and applied to so many square centimetres of canvas with so many strokes of a brush with the expenditure of so much energy.

But who would think of these details of measurement when enraptured by the loveliness of the painting?

They are but measurements of materials and not the measurement of the beauty portrayed. Keats got nearer to measuring beauty, and then only in the language of the spirit, when he wrote 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'.

'Beauty', 'Joy', 'For ever' - these are spiritual expressions, and they are immeasurable, boundless.

Is beauty diminished for one if another shares it? Does the first viewer have only half of what he had before the second observer came along? And if a third and a fourth come along to see this thing of beauty, does the share for each become proportionately less? No. Such terms of measurement cannot be applied to beauty because it is spiritual and it is boundless.

In fact, a spiritual quality shared is not diminished but is increased. The more one has the more another will possess. Think of how the love, joy, peace, hope, truth, goodness that one possesses communicate themselves to others. And the greater the number of those who come into this fellowship of sharing of things spiritual, the greater becomes the quantity and intensity of the things shared.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes occurs daily in the spiritual sense!

This is why Mohomet bade his hearers if they had two loaves, to sell one and buy some flowers of the narcissus. The loaves would be eaten and gone but the beauty of the flowers would remain, a spiritual possession. The loaves would but benefit one or two folk temporarily, but the beauty of the flowers would not diminish even though innumerable folk shared it.

So Jesus reminds us that 'Man shall not live by bread alone'.

And He challenges us, 'Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you'.