**31st October 2021 Bamford Chapel and Norden URC.**

**A fairer world**

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| **Action** | **Detail** | |
| Call to worship | Come with open hearts and minds to worship our merciful and generous God. Bow down and drink-in the marvels of God’s wonderful presence;  Thank God for the jewel-colours of Autumn, as the earth takes a deep breath draw closer that we may know and worship God’s perfect love.  Know that God is present here with us – in this place.  Amen  Let’s sing some powerful words of dedication | |
| Song  Jarod Cooper  ©1996 Sovereign Lifestyle Music  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 | King of kings, majesty,  God of heaven living in me,  gentle Saviour, closest friend,  strong deliverer, beginning and end,  all within me falls at Your throne.  *Your majesty, I can but bow.*  *I lay my all before you now.*  *In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty.*  Earth and heaven worship You, | love eternal, faithful and true,  who bought the nations,  ransomed souls,  brought this sinner  near to Your throne;  all within me cries out in praise.  *Your majesty, I can but bow. I lay my all before you now.*  *In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty.*  *I live to serve Your majesty.* |
| Opening prayers and Lord’s prayer | The one who gathered much did not have too much,  and the one who gathered little did not have too little.’  God of abundance, giver of all good gifts, we adore you. Your goodness has placed us in a community of faith – this church - where we can experience your blessings for ourselves, and where we can share them with each other and with those who do not come to church. We thank you that we are all equal in you; that you are indeed the Lord of balance.  **Amen.**  Lord Jesus, we are sorry for all the times we have taken your glorious and far-reaching generosity for granted… We are sorry for all the times that we ourselves have not been generous… We are sorry for the times we have put ourselves first...  We are sorry for the times we have not even thought about how our actions, or lack of action, may affect others…  We are sorry for the times we have offended you by our thoughts, words and deeds. **Forgive us, good Lord.** **Amen.**  Lord, we know that you have heard us saying sorry.  And we know that – yet again – you forgive us and set us gently on the right path so that we can try again.  Amen  LORD’S PRAYER | |
| Song  Eddie Espinosa  ©1982 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing/CopyCare | Change my heart, O God,  make it ever true;  change my heart, O God,  may I be like You. | You are the potter, I am the clay;  mould me and make me,  this is what I pray.  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 |
| Bible Readings | **2 Corinthians 8 (excerpts) (NIV)**  **9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.  **13** Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.  **14** At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality,  **15** as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”  **Matthew 14 (NIV)**  **13** When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.  **14** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.  **15** As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”  **16** Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”  **17** “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.  **18** “Bring them here to me,” he said.  **19** And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.  **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.  **21** The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. | |
| Hymn  Richard Gillard  ©1977 Thank you Music  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 | 1..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.  2..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.  3..I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear;  I will hold my hand out to you,  speak the peace you long to hear. | 4.. 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.  5.. 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.  6.. 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. |
| Sermon | As Christians, we are often described as the hands of Jesus in the world today, meaning we are expected to behave as Jesus would have done had he been physically here.  According to the Gospels, shared meals played a huge part in Jesus’s life – he often taught at meals, there were banquets in the parables, he came in for a lot of criticism because of who he chose to eat with. Jesus chose to be inclusive. It’s a path that we’re all expected to follow, as we try to live like Jesus.  The emphasis in the story of the feeding of the 5 thousand is on Jesus actually sharing the food. He **took** it, **blessed** it, **broke** it and **they all ate it**.  At that time, 5,000 people PLUS women and children were hungry and Jesus felt responsible for feeding them – they had been with him all day, listening and following. Jesus cared about them and felt deep compassion for them.  Jesus didn’t ask for manna from Heaven – he didn’t produce food from somewhere else.  He took what was there - and as it passed through his hands, there was enough for everyone – and it was distributed between them.  Similarly, at the last supper Jesus took what was already there. He shared it between everyone who was present. When it passed through Jesus’s hands, there was plenty for all.  As disciples – or Christians, or friends of Jesus (however you want to describe us), we’re asked to live like Jesus, so that our normal, everyday lives actually demonstrate our faith. That is one way to share the message of Jesus with other people too – eventually people do ask why we feel compelled to behave in the way we do. It can start a conversation, which is not such a bad thing!  The apostle Paul picked up on the theme of living like Jesus in many of his letters to the earliest churches. He was writing to Christians in a society where pagan Gods were worshipped, sometimes alongside the God we know. Many of those fledgling churches were struggling to keep the Christian faith, and Paul wrote to encourage them – though sometimes he could be quite dictatorial. He came up with some classic lines, like – in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, where he says ‘Now finish the work’– in other words, ‘Your heart is in the right place, now you’ve got to act…’ and of course, James too insists that Christians must live-out their faith.  In the passage we heard Paul was urging the church members at Corinth to be generous - The Christians in Jerusalem were starving. There was a terrible drought in Jerusalem and that region – the sun had been blazing relentlessly for weeks and they hadn’t had any significant rain for a couple of years - crops had failed, livestock had died and – yes, those fellow Christians were starving.  What always astonishes me is that Paul suggested (ordered) a collection for those starving Christians in Jerusalem, from so far away. He was adamant that the people of Corinth COULD make a difference to others who were so far away.  **If possible look at a map**.  Astonishing that he insisted that people in Greece could make a difference in Jerusalem. Furthermore, Paul took those gifts of money and sailed back to Jerusalem with them!  Anyway, I digress - Paul is very clear in what he says ‘For goodness sake! Send that money!’.  In his mind, there is no question – if you’re a friend of the risen Jesus, you WILL live like Jesus and you WILL care for people in need. You WILL act out your faith  A bit further on in the chapter, he says:  *“it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, in order that there may be a fair balance.*  *As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."”*  Maybe today we’d call him left-of-centre, but that message still stands today – prosperity – or abundance, as he says here – should be shared – not to make one person poor and another rich, but so that all can be reasonably even.  Living like Jesus – walking the way - is no easy task, especially just after lockdown and the pandemic.  My work takes me to a local foodbank regularly, and I see first-hand how important it is that we keep on trying.  Frighteningly now, it’s not just people in the geographical area of the foodbank who are struggling - people further up the road in leafy suburbia are also in need! People who never expected in their wildest nightmares to be asking for free food – but perhaps two generous salaries have stopped thanks to the pandemic, and the family find themselves in a big house, with a big mortgage and with no money for food. Chelwood – our foodbank is delivering to leafy Bramhall.  Going back to our Gospel reading today, it’s clear – yes, a miracle happened when Jesus fed 5,000 people, but as the food passed through the hands of Jesus, there was enough for everyone.  Today there is enough petrol for everyone. There are enough products in the shops. There IS enough food. If we kept our houses just one degree cooler, we’d make an impact in the global climate crisis.  We watch the news in horror at what seems to be happening to the supply chains, the animals that have been slaughtered and the farmers who are suffering, and yet we still want to buy fresh products out of season, so we slide the asparagus from Peru into our baskets, along with the air miles, which cause so much devastation to the climate.  Yet, as the food passed through Jesus’s hands, there was enough for all.  There is already plenty for all. And I realise now that the mission message I wanted to share today is right at the heart of all I’ve been saying:  It’s the way we handle it that counts – and in our handling, we send important messages about our faith as we strive towards a fairer world.  Serving our brothers and sisters – near here and further away – is what we’re asked to do – and if we each take small steps, collectively we take huge steps.  “As the food passed through his hands, there was enough for all”  ***A word of prayer***  *Help us Lord to be your hands – ensuring that there is enough for everyone.*  *Amen* | |
| Song  Daniel Schutte  1981 OCP Publication  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 | 1..I, the Lord of sea and sky,  I have heard My people cry.  All who dwell in dark and sin,  My hand will save.  I who made the stars of night,  I will make their darkness bright.  Who will bear My light to them?  Whom shall I send?  *Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?  I have heard You calling in the night.  I will go Lord, if You lead me.  I will hold Your people in my heart.* | 2..I, the Lord of snow and rain,  I have borne my people's pain.  I have wept for love of them, They turn away.  I will break their hearts of stone,  Give them hearts for love alone.  I will speak My word to them,  Whom shall I send?  3..I, the Lord of wind and flame,  I will tend the poor and lame.  I will set a feast for them,  My hand will save  Finest bread I will provide,  Till their hearts are satisfied.  I will give My life to them,  Whom shall I send? |
| Prayers of intercession | Lord God, you became poor so that we might become rich. In our world of inequality, we pray that you would show us how to share our riches with those who are in need.  **Lord, pour out your blessings.**  We pray for people who seek asylum in our land. We cannot begin to understand the things they have been through. We pray for a deep sense of your understanding, and for practical ways to show your love.  We pray for compassion from our leaders as they consider the refugees. **Lord, pour out your blessings.**  We pray for those who work long hours for very little money. Those with multiple jobs, trying to make ends meet.  People who need the foodbanks and people who give. For those who have no security, no comfortable home to go back to. **Lord, pour out your blessings.**  We pray for people who give their time and resources, working through food banks, outreach centres, charities. **Lord, pour out your blessings.**  And we pray that the world leaders will hear your message about sharing and being even-handed. Lord give them wisdom and generosity.  Lord, we bring you the families and friends of people who have died.  Finally Lord, we pray for ourselves, that as you bless us, we will bless others. **Lord, pour out your blessings.** **Amen.** | |
| Song  Verse 1, verse 2,  Chorus,  Verse 3, verse 4,  Chorus  Verse 5,  Chorus  Graham Kendrick  ©1993 Vertical Worship Songs/Sovereign Music UK  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 | *1..Beauty for brokenness,*  *hope for despair,*  *Lord, in Your suffering world*  *this is our prayer.*  *Bread for the children,*  *justice, joy, peace,*  *sunrise to sunset,*  *Your kingdom increase.*  *2..Shelter for fragile lives,*  *cures for their ills,*  *work for the craftsmen,*  *trade for their skills;*  *land for the dispossessed,*  *rights for the weak,*  *voices to plead the cause*  *of those who can't speak.*  *Chorus: God of the poor,*  *friend of the weak,*  *give us compassion we pray;*  *melt our cold hearts,*  *let tears fall like rain;*  *come, change our love*  *from a spark to a flame.* | 3.. Refuge from cruel wars,  havens from fear,  cities for sanctuary,  freedoms to share.  Peace to the killing-fields,  scorched earth to green,  Christ for the bitterness,  His cross for the pain.  4.. Rest for the ravaged earth,  oceans and streams  plundered and poisened -  our future, our dreams.  Lord, end our madness,  carelesness, greed;  make us content with  the things that we need.  5.. Lighten our darkness,  breathe on this flame  until Your justice  burns brightly again;  until the nations  learn of Your ways,  seek Your salvation  and bring You their praise. |
| Blessing | Invite to say to each other –  May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore Amen | |