

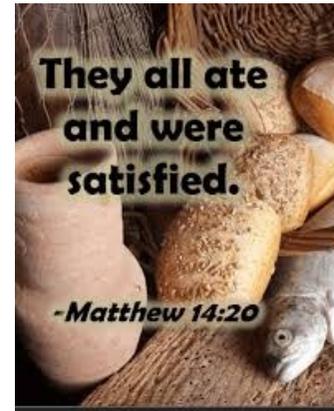


This time of lockdown and now restricted number of services has had a big impact on the income for all of our churches. It has also not been possible to hold our usual fund raising activities. There are still bills like insurance premiums that have to be paid. We also have a duty to contribute our Parish Share to the diocese to pay for clergy and other expenses. We are grateful to those who have continued with their giving and to those who have increased theirs. Please consider if you could be generous to help our churches through this difficult time. Please see Contact magazine for your churchwarden's telephone numbers – they will be pleased to hear from you.

Wednesday. Evening Prayer at 7pm on Zoom is continuing to attract a regular following. You are welcome to join us – please ask Patrick or Julia for details.

For your prayers:

- For Bishops Martin and Mike as they lead us through this time
- For Patrick and Jolann as they take a break this month
- That people will act responsibly to protect themselves and others
- For those countries who have fewer resources to combat Covid19



The Glem Valley United Benefice

Sunday 2nd August

Eighth Sunday of Trinity

St Mary's Glemsford 10.30am Benefice Service of Holy Communion

also

Songs of Praise
BBC1, 1.15pm

Aled Jones is at the Olympic Stadium in London exploring the link between Christianity and sport.

Collect for this Sunday

Lord God,

your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake: when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Romans 9 v 1 – 5 Paul's Anguish Over Israel

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Matthew 14 v 13 – 21 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

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.

A reflection by Julia Perkins

The feeding of the five thousand is one of those stories we have heard many times, so maybe some of the details get overlooked and deserve more thought.

Just before today’s reading starts, Jesus has been told of the death of John the Baptist, beheaded by Herod. John was Jesus’ cousin and had baptised him, which had marked the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. This was shocking news on a personal level and also indicated the danger that Jesus would be in as he went on drawing large crowds with his teaching.

Instead of being able to take time out by himself to digest all this, Jesus finds the crowd has followed him. There is no sign of annoyance that they have invaded his privacy, instead Jesus has compassion on them. Jesus was known as a healer as well as a teacher, who could explain things through stories or parables that people could relate to.

Setting aside his own concerns, he spends time healing the sick. It was a large crowd and Jesus’ compassion would translate as a personal concern for each one brought to him for help - so some hours would have passed. When the disciples are worried about people getting hungry and suggest they disperse, Jesus turns their idea around and expects the disciples to feed them. Their answer is not completely in the negative, they show him the resources they have – five loaves and two fish – and assume that the task is impossible. Jesus takes what they offer and shows how, through his power, it is not only enough but plenty and to spare. He gives thanks to God for the food and uses the disciples to distribute it.

We are often in the position of thinking that we are powerless to make a difference – the problem is too great. The current COVID crisis has meant that many have been isolated in their homes and maybe less able to help their neighbours than before. But staying at home has benefitted our community and also given an opportunity for others to serve by providing meals and shopping. I have heard good news stories of people thankful for the care they have received. We may think what we can offer is rather small or insignificant, but Jesus can take that and magnify it in a way that we could never anticipate. Jesus will bless what we offer to him and use us to do his work.

I find it comforting that the disciples were such ordinary people, who often didn’t understand what Jesus was saying or the full meaning of what he was doing. Jesus continued working with them, warts and all and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they were the founders of the church after the resurrection. By that same Spirit, Jesus can still use what we have to offer, however small it may seem to us.