



# **March Team Ministry**

**March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda**

*Welcome*

**9th Sunday after Trinity ~ 1st August 2021**

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

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*We are keeping services much the same; staying away if ill, wearing masks, washing hands and respecting distance. We have congregational singing for those wearing masks. We continue to keep people safe and to feel safe.*

**~ Services with Social Distancing ~**

**St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am**

**St Mary's Sundays 9.15am**

**St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am**

**"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."**

## **Prayers**

Lord, giver of lasting life, satisfy our hunger through Christ, the Bread of Life, and quench our thirst with your gift of belief, that we may no longer work for the food that perishes, but believe in the One whom you have sent. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of Moses, who rained down bread on Israel's wandering people: lead us to the food that never leaves us craving, addicted to consuming, but fills our whole humanity with life enough for all; through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen.

## **2 Samuel 11 v26 - 12 v13a**

*When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.*

*But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.' Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'*

*Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'* David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan said to David, 'Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die.'

### **Gospel of St John 6 v24-35**

When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." ' Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

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### **Meditation**

"I am the bread of life"; we will have several weeks hearing the chapter, 6, in John's gospel which meditates on this. It starts with the narrative of the feeding of 5000, where the crowd in an isolated place get miraculously fed with more than enough. A little boy shares his barley loaves and dried fish, yet somehow there is not only enough to feed everyone but there are many baskets left over. The disciples leave by boat, Jesus joins them, and we then get this extended meditation on the bread of life.

I must confess to being very fond of bread, the taste and the smell. There is nothing quite like awakening to the smell of fresh bread, which I frequently do, thanks to Pamela and the succession of bread machines we have had. For my breakfast I almost invariably have a mug of black drinking chocolate with a thick slice or a bread roll. I do not usually have anything on it, for the taste of bread is enough. Sometimes Pamela adds nuts or seeds, and may use a variety of flours. Before marriage (and bread machines) I used to buy rolls and freeze them, microwaving one each day (occasionally, if I forgot to put to defrost and used full power got a solid, brittle inedible brick of a roll). In my childhood I remember local bakers who delivered fresh round batch loaves – I was never really taken with mass factory produced sliced white bread that was fluffy but lacked taste and substance, so find the phrase "the best thing since sliced bread rather ironic"!

Given these experiences, it might seem that the bread of communion might seem disappointing; unleavened, not strong on taste, texture or nutrition. Are we to see this as the "bread of life", that means there will be no more hunger; that redefines what we mean by "true bread", and is seen as a magnificent gift from heaven? Although it has been painful not to be able to receive the chalice during covid up to now, it has also been painful not to be able to break and share in the one bread by having to use individual wafers, losing the imagery of Christ's broken body being shared with those who are now his broken body. Hopefully, we will be able to return to sharing portions of larger wafers when it is safe to do so, just as we now are able to make available the cup without any pressure whatsoever to take it.

Well, let's ask if John is referring to Communion here? As you may remember, John alone of the gospels, and also unlike Paul's writings, does not include an account of Jesus taking bread at his last supper and saying 'This is my body' and 'Do this in remembrance of me'. Perhaps this is a wake-up call to remind us to connect with other parts of our tradition when we are at communion; the feeding of the 5000; the meals in homes of Pharisees and others; the inn on the Emmaus Road and the beach of Lake Galilee where Jesus also shared bread. And recall too the wine at Cana; the water in the Samaritan well; the Cup of Suffering that Jesus prays will pass.

John makes a connection with the Exodus, where the people, after complaining to God that wilderness seems worse than slavery, God provides them daily with just enough (perishable) bread. Jesus provides the 5000 with bread showing he is equal with the God of Moses, but he goes on to contrast the bread he provides as enduring, eternal and for life. And what's more he identifies himself with this bread. He also will say that those who eat this bread will not die.

Now we have to admit that we cannot take this language simply at face value, anymore than we do when Jesus says "I am the Door", as if we expect him to be rectangular, panelled and with a letter box, or if we think he wants us to think he is good with sheep rather than with people! However much we believe in God, in Jesus, we will certainly experience hunger, thirst, and yes we will all die! Is it enough to say that Jesus is talking of heavenly realities using earthly illustrations? Remember that Matthew talks about hungering and thirsting after righteousness; does he hit the nail on the head, or is he evading what John really means? Are we just trying to evade the sting and meaning of death if we simply say that we pass from temporal to eternal life?

In one sense I simply want to say to you; wait until we have got through John 6, or read it all for yourself. In another sense, I want to listen to all the many reasons why you come to communion, or have missed it or continue to be unable to come to it because of the covid risks.

Like the disciples, I want to say, and maybe John wants us to say, "Sir, give us this bread always." and I must then hear the reply. Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' The bread of communion points us to, gives a foretaste of, enables us to share with others, remembers, Jesus. It is Jesus himself who is the bread of life. In communion we partake of Jesus; 'this is my body, blood'. In communion we receive, as well as are reminded of, his promises. Does this mean his promises are empty as we will surely at times experience hunger, even if only hopefully in mild form? We will be able to have our physical thirst quenched, but Jesus is talking about longings that are deeper. We will die, but Jesus is saying that we will never be dead to him, dead to God or dead to love. I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come will ever be able to separate us from the love of God. In taking communion we invite it, we acknowledge our need for it, we affirm God's nature in choosing it, and we receive it.

## God bless, Andrew

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### Prayers

Soul of Christ, sanctify me,  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, refresh me.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within your wounds hide me.  
Let me never be separated from you.  
From the power of darkness defend me.  
In the hour of my death, call me  
and bid me come to you,  
that with your saints I may praise you  
for ever and ever.

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.