

Sunday 2 August 2026
The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Collect:

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our day,
and make her holy, strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 55:1-5; Psalm 145:8-9, 15-22; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

While these are not the chosen readings for Lammas, the feast of the first cut of the harvest (1 August), three of them fit well with the theme of giving thanks for our food. The one that does not is from Romans, which comprises the opening passage to a lengthy section of the letter that deals with the contentious relationship between Gentiles and Jews. Paul reveals his anxiety concerning Israel's general failure to accept Christ, which is complicated by his continuing solidarity with the tradition of his ancestors. In the light of his perceived failure of the majority of his fellow Jews to embrace Christ as Messiah, Paul has to work out how they now fit into God's plan for salvation.

Isaiah 55 opens with the first of two invitations to Israel to come to God for release, renewal and refreshment. It is spoken by God to the people exiled in Babylon and is filled with unconditional grace, through a thrice repeated invitation to come and rest in God's presence and with God's bounty, which comes in the form of plentiful supplies of nourishing food. God's grace and the provision of food in due season are picked up by Psalm 145. Within these few verses the word 'all' occurs a dozen times, emphasising the inclusiveness and universality of God's actions and intentions. The language of the Psalmist expresses confidence in a God who provides, who is faithful, gracious and just.

All four Gospel writers record the feeding of the five thousand. Matthew follows Mark's version and the miracle is an act of compassion towards a people who are without food and away from home at a late hour. It can be viewed as a tangible example of the truth of God's words in Isaiah. Where Matthew digresses from Mark, he does so for his own reasons. In Mark Jesus leads the disciples to a quiet place so that they can debriefed now that they have returned from a mission. Matthew has Jesus withdraw to a lonely place to process the news of John the Baptist's execution. Will Herod's focus shift now from John to Jesus? How does Jesus deal with this? His decision is not to hide, but to continue to publicly bring hope and nourishment to the people, and on this occasion he does so in a ritualistic way, that we see as eucharistic, as he takes, blesses, breaks and shares the food. Perhaps we can also understand this as a reminder that what goes on at the Lord's Table cannot be divorced from wider politics or community engagement.

Holy Father,
who gathered us here around the table of your Son
to share this meal with the whole household of God:
in that new world where you reveal the fullness of your peace,
gather people of every race and language
to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for next week:

1 Kings 19:9-18; Psalm 85:8-13; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33
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