**PRINTED WORSHIP MATERIAL for SUNDAY 15th AUGUST 2021 compiled by Rev. Pam Siddall (Buckden) for the use of those unable to attend an**

**‘in presence’ service today.**

**Call to Worship**: (*Proverbs 9 v. 5&6)* “Come, eat my food and drink the wine that I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight.”

(Psalm 34 v. 8) “Taste and see that the lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”

**HYMN:** *(StF 401 or H&P 460)* Come, sinners, to the gospel feast

**Prayer of Confession**

Lord, you invite us into your presence to share in a feast of worship but we are unworthy guests, often picky about our spiritual food, sometimes hanging back from the table (drawn by other, more worldly concerns) and prone to be ungrateful even for the lavish banquet on offer. Even when we gladly accept your life-giving nourishment, we easily forget that this is a sharing table and we fail to draw others in. *(We take a time of quiet to allow the lord to speak to us.)* Lord, please forgive us, feed us and renew us in your service. May we hear those words of grace, “Your sins are forgiven.” **Amen**

**A Prayer of Praise and thankfulness:**

Lord, you lift us up even though we let you down. You forgive us and restore our souls.

**We praise you with thankful hearts.**

Lord, in Jesus the living bread and wine, you offer us life in all its fullness.

**We praise you with thankful** **hearts.**

Lord, you are constantly at work among us in your Spirit to heal and to help.

**We praise you with thankful hearts.**

Father, Son and Holy Spirit **accept our offering of praise and thanksgiving today. Amen.**

**Reading:** John 6 v.51-58,

**Thoughts on the gospel:**

No, don’t change channels! I know the lectionary’s given us yet another week about ‘the bread of life’ but the message continues to develop. This is a challenging passage and when we read it we see that perhaps it’s no wonder early opponents of Christianity accused its followers of, among other atrocities, cannibalism! It’s very important to note the use of the word ‘flesh’ 6 times in this passage. ‘This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world” says Jesus. What’s this about?

1. It’s about Jesus being entirely human as well as entirely divine. Chapter 1 of John’s gospel is a prologue introducing us to the amazing cosmic Christ, God who became human (Son of Man) for our sake: “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1, v. 14)
2. It’s about the cross; the complete sacrificial giving of the flesh and blood of Jesus in his crucifixion. He enters into our death making it possible that we may enter into his eternal life.
3. It’s about life; the life of the world, our life, that “life in all its fullness” (John 10, v. 10) which Jesus offers to all who believe in him; to all who ‘feed on’ him.
4. It also points, for us, to the Eucharist; the bread and wine of Holy Communion through which we remember these things and thankfully receive afresh the life of Christ through this means of grace (something we’ve so much missed during the pandemic.)

What does it mean, then, to feed on the flesh and blood of Jesus? When we eat a healthy meal, we ingest the food and its goodness becomes part of our own body, nourishing it, keeping it alive, giving us energy and the means to function both physically and mentally. Without that food, we would die. To feed on the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus means to take into ourselves his very humanity, his character, his compassionate loving-kindness and sacrificial goodness, his integrity, justice and righteousness.

We do this by walking closely with him day by day in prayerful devotion and worship (both alone and with fellow believers) and being open to receive his forgiveness and grace; also by deep study of the scriptures and all the many other available means of learning and by faithful service in the community where we constantly meet Jesus in the lives of those we serve. In the growing closeness of our relationship with him, guided and in-filled by the Holy Spirit, we become more and more at one with him and he with us, just as he is at one with his Father God. Surely this is our pathway to heaven, right here and now as well as for all eternity.

**HYMN:** *(StF 594 or H&P 617) Lord Jesus Christ*

**Reading:** Ephesians 5, v. 15-20

**The word for us today:**

So here it is, a very simple set of practical instructions which are as relevant for us today as they were for the Ephesian Christians in the time of St, Paul. ‘The days are evil’ says the writer and we can nod our heads to that here today, so we must ask ourselves what it means to ‘be wise’ and I think it means to keep alert to what is happening on the news and in our communities and be prepared to respond to the needs and to the debates of our times. We must be ready to apply the understanding and the resources of our faith in practical ways and to offer the hope and healing of Christ himself to the situations we find. People are longing for something to fill the voids in their lives and are more open than we often imagine to receive what Jesus has to offer so let us do as we are instructed and be ready to “make the most of every opportunity”.

Times are hard and difficult for us as much as for anyone else and it might be only too tempting, for some, to drown our sorrows and avoid facing the problems. Don’t turn to the bottle, says Paul, but be filled with quite another sort of Spirit, God’s Holy Spirit. The warmth of the Spirit glows most brightly in community and now that we can worship and sing together again let’s make the most of every opportunity to do so in fellowship with the wider Christian family to help breathe the embers of our spiritual life back into heartfelt, evangelistic flame again. The circuit Songs of Praise on 5th September will be one such opportunity, for those who are able.

The final instruction is vital: always give thanks. Take a little time now to ponder where we might have fallen short in having a thankful attitude. It isn’t necessarily easy to give thanks for everything but it is always possible to find reasons to be thankful. Corrie Ten-Boom found she could even thank God for the fleas in her concentration camp hut: at least it meant their oppressors kept their distance! Let’s end our thinking this morning with a personal time of “giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen

**HYMN:** *(StF 398 or H&P 326)* There’s a spirit in the air

**Prayer of Intercession**

Lord God, we know that you are “living, working in our world”, this world that you loved so much that you sent your only Son to save us. Hear our heart-felt prayers for the needs of the world. As we pray, show us what you might want us to do ourselves to contribute to answering those prayers.

We pray for all the needy of the world; those hungry in body, mind or spirit. *Loving Lord*:

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

We pray for all those with power and influence in leadership that they may strive for equality, justice and goodness in the world. *Loving Lord*: **Give us this day our daily bread.**

We pray for all afflicted by natural disasters and by the ill effects of climate change. We lift to you the forth-coming climate conference and pray that brave decisions may be made and acted upon.

*Loving Lord*: **Give us this day our daily bread**.

We lift to you the names of all those for whom we’re concerned at this time: our neighbours, friends and families - the needs we know of and the needs that are known to God alone. We bring our own needs too, to the one whose generous compassion knows no bounds.

*Loving lord*: **Give us this day our daily bread.**

We remember before you all those who have died and all those who are sad and grieving at this time. May they find comfort and strength in your love and our support.

*Loving Lord:* **Give us this day our daily bread.**

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

**We say *the Lord’s Prayer.***

(*As we pray, we make ourselves aware of all those praying with us in the community of faith around the world.)*

‘Our Father….’

**HYMN: (***StF 57 or H&P 10) Let all the World in every corner sing, my God and King.*

**A prayer of blessing**

God to enfold you, Christ to uphold you, Spirit to keep you in heaven’s sight;

so, may God grace you, heal and embrace you, lead you through darkness into the light. *(John L. Bell. StF 648)*