**Transcript August 1st 2021**

**Welcome -** Revd Canon Nick Bird

Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who comes to us as the bread of life.

We gather from different places and at different times.

We gather when some have quiet hearts and some are in the midst of storms.

We gather with hearts open, ready to meet with God.

We gather with hearts closed, hoping that God does not show up.

Ready or unready, may God take this offering of our arrival

as a sign that our hands are empty, but yet we are still seeking.

Let us pray:

Living and loving God,

who exists beyond time and space,

may we know your presence with us now in this act of worship.

Surprise us. Disarm us. Slip through our defences. Penetrate our hearts.

May you be in our seeking, and our companion on our way,

that our hearts may be strangely warmed by the touch of your love.

**Amen.**

**Song**: **This I believe (The Creed)**

1. Our Father everlasting

The all creating One

God Almighty

Through Your Holy Spirit

Conceiving Christ the Son

Jesus our Saviour

I believe in God our Father

I believe in Christ the Son

I believe in the Holy Spirit

Our God is three in one

I believe in the resurrection

That we will rise again

For I believe in the name of Jesus

1. Our Judge and our Defender

Suffered and crucified

Forgiveness is in You

Descended into darkness

You rose in glorious life

Forever seated high

I believe in God our Father

I believe in Christ the Son

I believe in the Holy Spirit

Our God is three in one

I believe in the resurrection

That we will rise again

For I believe in the name of Jesus

1. I believe in life eternal

I believe in the virgin birth

I believe in the saints' communion

And in Your holy Church

I believe in the resurrection

When Jesus comes again

For I believe, in the name of Jesus

I believe in God our Father

I believe in Christ the Son

I believe in the Holy Spirit

Our God is three in one

I believe in the resurrection

That we will rise again

For I believe in the name of Jesus

For I believe in the name of Jesus

**Confession and Absolution**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,

we have sinned against you

and against our neighbour

in thought and word and deed,

through negligence, through weakness,

through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry

and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,

who died for us,

forgive us all that is past

and grant that we may serve you in newness of life

to the glory of your name.

**Amen**.

Almighty God,

who forgives all who truly repent,

have mercy upon us,

pardon and deliver us from all our sins,

confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,

and keep us in life eternal;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

**Reading: John 6.24-35**

So 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 sea, 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.

**Sermon**

I'm wondering how similar manna is to marshmallows.

There is a famous experiment that psychologists did on children (who are probably the most fun to do such things to). Back in the 1960s and 70s, they used marshmallows to test children's ability for deferred gratification. In an otherwise empty room, kids between the ages of 3-5 years old were left on their own with a marshmallow on the table in front of them. They were told by the researcher that they would be left there for a couple of minutes, and if they could resist eating the sweet, then on their return the researcher would give them a second one.

The ones who were more impulsive, when later tested, showed poorer outcomes in terms of health and education attainment, and on a range of other measures.

For whatever reason, when I read this passage from John's gospel, I immediately think of marshmallows.

The crowd seem childlike – impulsive, impetuous, chasing Jesus across the water. Jesus has just fed them, 'about five thousand in all', and now they are on the hunt. They wanted to 'take him by force and make him king', and one could see the attraction of having a national leader who could actually deliver on their promises!

But Jesus is countering this. 'It's not about the lunch', I think he's saying. 'You ate the first marshmallow immediately, but, if you have the patience and the will and the openness, there is so much more on offer. You have eaten this bread, but I am the bread of life'. Will they settle for the snack, or answer the invitation to the feast?

Many people understand belief as being binary, like a light switch. It's either on or it's off. Or that faith is a simple act of the will, rather than a gift from God. And why do we think it's always about us?

Here, Jesus says: 'Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty'. So many people will read this as saying, 'I believe in Jesus, the switch is on, it's all good, bring me the bread!' rather than read it as an invitation to growth and transformation. A passive reception, rather than a forward motion. That would be lazy spirituality, a lazy faith.

I think the clue's in the words 'I am the bread of *life*'. Elsewhere we hear Jesus say, 'For *life* is more than food' (Luke 12.23). In the feeding of the five thousand Jesus demonstrates the Kingdom economics of multiplication, and the crowd respond with subtraction and consumption. Life means growth and change and transformation. Unfortunately, to many, religion means being fixed, unchanging and standing still. Bad religion is a dangerous thing.

For me, this passage speaks of the dangers of a marshmallow faith – tempting and sweet, and yet, in the end, it not only doesn't satisfy, like all sweets it actually increases the hunger. But what Jesus offers is not something to entertain and distract us from real life, but for us to embrace life fully. When the Master invites us to believe in him, this is not a simple acknowledgement of his existence, but a call to follow closely in his steps. Not just looking at him, but actively moving towards him in faith and love and trust.

Our biggest challenge as Christians is to live as though Jesus meant what he said.

**Taize chant - Eat this Bread**

Eat this bread, drink this cup

Come to Me and never be hungry.

Eat this Bread, drink this Cup.

Trust in Me and you will not thirst.

I am the Bread of Life,

the true Bread sent from the Father

**Intercessions**

**Let us pray together.**

Lord, you are the bread of life, bringing life to the world. As we bring our prayers to you today, may you fill our emptiness with your goodness: our weakness with your strength and our needs with your merciful and gracious provision.

Father of All..........hear our prayer.

We pray for the world church, including our own Benefice.

Lord, we pray for the inevitable changing role of the church. Be at the centre of any deliberations and planning on how to move forward, for you are the focus of our love and worship, for you alone are the Lord. May we continue to minister to the needs of those who feel vulnerable, confused and anxious during these uncertain times.

As the Body of Christ, may we show unity of spirit: wisdom and love in our actions, and power in our witness. We all have different gifts and strengths to offer knowing that, what we offer to you will be used and sustained by your provision. You meet each of us at our point of need so that, through faith, we can receive Jesus Christ, the bread of life.

Father of All........hear our prayer.

We pray for our troubled world, experiencing disasters, unrest, poverty, floods and fires. Bring the reassurance that you have promised to sustain us during suffering and hardship, as we place our trust in you, and grant to those who are living through these circumstances, the courage and strength to endure.

Give wisdom and integrity to all those in authority, that they may administer justice and compassion in their decisions.

Father of All........hear our prayer.

Lord, we give thanks for our community, especially those who have shown care and compassion during the pandemic and continue to do so. Bless our homes, our loved ones, friends and neighbours. May we humbly show love and understanding in all our relationships, that we may share with them YOUR love, life and peace.

Father of All........hear our prayer.

Lord of compassion, you are our strength in times of weakness and our hope in times of darkness. We bring to you all those who are low in spirit: the weary and the despairing: those who are sick and in pain, and those facing a terminal illness. We remember too, those who are mourning the death of a loved one. As they recall memories,, perhaps the pain of loss may seem too much to bear at this time.

So, Lord, in your mercy, draw them to yourself, that your healing touch may bring relief, comfort and peace.

Father of All........hear our prayer.

In the coming week......

May the God of grace go with us.

Christ’s goodness surround us,

And the Spirit’s guidance lead us, as we make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit.

Father of All........accept these prayers.

**The Lord’s prayer**

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Blessing Collect and Dismissal**

Almighty God,  
who sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your Church:  
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love and joy and peace;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Go into the world,

not to live quietly, but to live boldly,

not to live loudly, but to live humbly,

not to live flamboyantly, but to live simply.

Humbler, simpler, bolder is the way of Jesus,

so go, seek the one who calls you to life.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be with you, and with those whom you love,

today, and for all your days to come. **Amen.**

**Song: Sing of the Lord’s Goodness**

1. Sing of the Lord's goodness,

Father of all wisdom,

come to him and bless his name.

Mercy he has shown us,

his love is for ever,

faithful to the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations,*

*sing of your Lord's goodness,*

*melodies of praise and thanks to God.*

*Ring out the Lord's glory,*

*praise him with your music,*

*worship him and bless his name.*

1. Power he has wielded, honour is his garment,

risen from the snares of death.

His word he has spoken,

one bread he has broken,

new life he now gives to all.

*Come, then, all you nations...*

1. Courage in our darkness,

comfort in our sorrow,

Spirit of our God most high;

solace for the weary,

pardon for the sinner,

splendour of the living God.

*Come, then, all you nations...*

1. Praise him with your singing,

praise him with the trumpet,

praise God with the lute and harp;

praise him with the cymbals,

praise him with your dancing,

praise God till the end of days.

*Come, then, all you nations…*