

Sunday 25 July, 2021



This short act of worship has been prepared for. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to worship

"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker [Psalm 95:6]."

Opening Hymn: 25 StF

[God is here as we his people](#)

Prayers of Adoration

Lord we use so many words, but our voice cannot offer you the praise you desire. We sing so many songs, but our worship can never scale the heights of heaven. We offer so many prayers, but too often our hearts are far from you and our lives betray what is heard from our lips. Lord, by your holy spirit alone can we sing your praises, and only through his power can we declare your glory. Lord, touch our lips and our lives transform our prayers and our song and we will give you the glory that you deserve. Amen.

Father forgive us for being the kind of people we are. We are never satisfied, never content with what we have. So we are ever anxious, often angry, sometimes envious and jealous. We are concerned for our own needs but careless of each other's. We allow ourselves to descend to the level of the rest of creation and the survival of the fittest. Open our lives again to your fatherly love. Hold us, forgive us and transform us. Give us in all of life's pain and sorrow, peace and joy in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: 238 StF

[Lead us, heavenly Father lead us](#)

Bible Reading

[John 6:1-14](#)

Sermon

"Life isn't about living without problems. Life is about solving problems [Tom Krause]"

Jesus is the most excellent problem solver. He came to solve humankind's biggest problem—our need for salvation, to be freed from having to pay the price for our sins. But He didn't stop there. During his earthly life he solved so many other problems. When there was no wine at the wedding, He created more wine [John 2:1-12]. When people came to Him with their health problems, even ones they'd had for many years, He healed them [John 5:5-8; Luke 8:43-48]. When the adulterous woman was about to be stoned, with His great wisdom and love, He and not only saved the woman but changed her life (John 8:1-30). In our reading today Jesus solves the problems of the hungry multitude by multiplying five loaves and two fishes [John 6:1-14].

Feeding the 5000 is one of the miracles recorded in all four gospels. [Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14]. All four gospels tell us that there were five thousand men, and Matthew 14:21 says, "they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children." That means the problem is feeding hungry people around 15 to 20,000 in a remote place where food is not available.

This miracle shows four approaches to solving problems, which reflects our approaches to issues too.

Firstly, Avoiding the problem.

This solution comes from the disciples in general. They suggested that Jesus send the people away (Mark 6:35-36). Get rid of the problem (see Matthew 15:23). But Jesus knew that the hungry people would faint on the way if somebody did not feed them. It was evening (Matthew 14:15), and that was no time for travel.

Avoiding problem might seem like a great way to become less stressed, but this isn't necessarily the case. More often than not, confronting a problem is the only way to reduce the trauma it causes effectively. Avoiding a problem is not going to be a solution.

Secondly, Mitigating the problem.

This solution comes from Philip as a result of his response to our Lord's "test question:" "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5). Philip "counted the cost" and decided they would need the equivalent of 200 days' wages! And even that would not provide bread enough to satisfy the hunger of all the men, women, and children (Matthew 14:21). Philip at least worked on problem that was neglected by others. So, we need appreciate Philip's attitude to the problem. He tries to mitigate, lessening the gravity of an issue by assessing their resources. Of course, Jesus was testing the strength of Philip's faith. But mitigating a problem is again not going to solve it.

Thirdly, Dealing with the Problem

Andrew represents this attitude. "Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9 "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (John 6:8-9). Andrew was not quite sure how he could solve the problem with the resources he found. He found a little boy who had a small lunch: two little fish and five barley cakes. But he did what he could, and he brought the boy and his lunch to Jesus. Once again, Andrew is busy getting somebody to Jesus (see John 1:40-42; 12:20-22). We do not know how Andrew met this lad, but we are glad he did! Andrew dealt with the problems.

"Your success and happiness depend on your willingness to help others solve their problems" [T. B. Joshua]

Fourthly, Fixing the Problem

This final solution comes from our Lord, and it is the proper solution. He took the little boy's lunch, blessed it broke it, handed it out to His disciples, and they fed the whole crowd! The miracle took place in the hands of the Saviour, not in the hands of the disciples. He multiplied the food; they only had the joyful privilege of passing it out. Not only were the people fed and satisfied, but the disciples retrieved twelve baskets of fragments for future use.

So, the best way to deal with our problems is not to avoid or mitigate them but instead deal with them and ask Jesus to fix them. The practical lesson is clear: whenever there is a need, give all that you have to Jesus and let Him do the rest. Amen.

Hymn: 153 Stf [Break thou the bread of life](#)

Intercessory Prayers

Father, we pray for the whole church, which you called into being through your Son. We are aware that it was always your intention that your church should be a blessing to all people

everywhere. We ask that by your Holy Spirit your church may be daily renewed and empowered for the task for which you gave it life.

Father, we pray that we and all our fellow Christians may be ready for any sacrifice, any action, any declaration that will clearly demonstrate faith, hope and love to our neighbour, our family and our friends, and to those with whom we work and those we meet on the journey of life each day.

Father, we pray for those whose faith has lost meaning, whose worship is all ritual and empty words; for those who are no longer aware of God's presence, his power or his love. For those who see only the hurt and the pain and the darkness of life. We ask that they may see the joy and the goodness and light of Christ in the lives of his people.

Father, we pray for those we know who have been reduced to despair; for those whose joy has been crushed by the indifference of others; for those who have suffered great grief, who are left numb by sorrow and loss; for those still overwhelmed by the separation death brings from some one they loved and who loved them.

Father, we pray for ourselves. In the face of all of life's uncertainties, sorrows, hurts, disappointments and failures, we ask that the assurance of Christ's presence, power and love may give us strength, hope and faith.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Hymn: 465 Stf

[Guide me, O thou great Jehovah](#)

Benediction

God the Creator made you,

God the Saviour heals you,

God the Spirit sends you.

Go now, for he is with you. Amen.