

The Lord be with you: **and also with you.**

Lord, speak to us: **that we may hear your word.**

Move among us: **that we may behold your glory.**

Receive our prayers: **that we may learn to trust you. Amen.**

As we celebrate the grace and good of God, we remember our sins and weaknesses.

Father God, we confess that we often take the gifts of your creation for granted, and use them chiefly to further our own interests:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Saviour Christ, we confess that we often give in to the selfish desires of our hearts, and the uncaring ways of the world.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Holy Spirit, we confess that we often close our minds to your influence, and fail to bear good fruits in our lives.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Absolution Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Isaiah 55:1-5 [An Invitation to Abundant Life]

Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.
This is the word of the Lord;
Thanks be to God.

Matthew 14:13-21 [Feeding the Five Thousand]

Now when Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew from his home town of Nazareth in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.' Jesus said to them, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Sermon

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Everyone I've ever known has been awed by this – this miracle. It's easy to understand. The very fact that five loaves and two fish fed five thousand men – yes, men only: women and children weren't counted – makes us stop for a minute as we try to process it. And remember: the story was taking place around the Sea of Galilee among very ordinary people. It is – well – difficult to process.

But it surely makes us re-assess what we perceive as normal – rational. And remember that Matthew directed his gospel to other ordinary people in northern Syria 2,000 years ago. At fellow Jewish people, who were steeped in the history, the cultural background, of a people who believed that they were special: that God had chosen them to be special.

They would have all have been brought up on stories just like this one: stories that convinced them that they WERE special. Take the story of the widow of Zarephath from the first Book of the Kings, where in a time of famine, Elijah was sent to bring

her enough food to save her son and herself. It's a miraculous story of God's compassion and of his active help. Every Jew knows it, even today. So do we.

In the 2nd Book of the Kings we're told that a man came bringing food from the first fruits – a harvest offering - to Elisha, the man of God. Twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" He repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, they shall eat and have some left." And they had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

Both are miracles which demonstrate two things: (1) the power of the Lord to do wonderful things, and (2) the compassion of God to his people.

In this miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, did Matthew succumb to the temptation to "big up" that story of Elisha, as Donald Trump would call it? That the power and compassion of God needed to be inflated to convince us? Certainly all four gospels repeat it, which does suggest that this was a truly remarkable demonstration of God's power, and his compassion.

I'll leave it at that – this miracle, more than many others, speaks for itself. I hope it makes you stop and ponder about God. His power. And his compassion for us, his people.

And now to God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, power and glory. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in on Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Intercessions, beginning with the Collect of the Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Blessed are you, O Lord,

and blest are those who observe and keep your law:

Help us to seek you with our whole heart,

to delight in your commandments

and to walk in the glorious liberty

given to us by your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

We pray now to the Lord, the generous giver of all our needs.

Grant that the Church may have grace to feed all who are hungry for the word of salvation. Lord, keep your people faithful in obedience and untiring in works of mercy.

Come to the aid of the multitudes who wander in the wilderness places of the world, unsatisfied but not knowing what they are seeking. Give to those in authority hearts of compassion not to turn away those who need their care. Support those who have been quarantined, and those who have been wrongly imprisoned or separated by conflict.

Make us more hospitable in our homes, ready to meet the bodily and emotional needs of those who come into our lives. Bless the helpers in this community who feed the hungry and bring food to those who cannot prepare it for themselves. We pray for our teachers and administrators who are planning for the safe return of our children to school.

Have mercy on the hungry, on the victims of famine in Yemen and elsewhere. Give power and compassion to the agencies that work for their relief. We pray for all suffering from the COVID virus; and for the many who have been affected in their families.

We pray for all who were sustained in their earthly bodies and now have tasted the fulness of God's bounty. We give thanks that they rejoice with the great multitude of the faithful departed. **Amen.**

Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us
therefore let us celebrate the feast.

The Lord is here. **His spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever, Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

We being many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.

Almighty God,

we thank you for feeding us

with the spiritual food

of 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.

Dismissal:

Strengthen for service, Lord,

the hands that holy things have taken;

may the ears that have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute;

may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;

may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope;

and may the bodies which have been fed with your body

be refreshed with the fulness of your life;

and the blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be with you and remain with you always.

Amen.