

[OPENING PRAYERS AND HOLY COMMUNION ARE AVAILABLE AS A VIDEO HERE](#)

**PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS**

**WELCOME**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.  
His steadfast love endures for ever!  
Grace and peace be with you  
and also with you.

**SENTENCE**

The Lord is near to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desire of all that fear him, hears their cry, and saves them. Psalm 145.18–19

**LIGHTING THREE CANDLES**

We light a light in the name of the Maker,  
    who lit the world and breathed the breath of life for us  
We light a light in the name of the Son,  
    who saved the world and stretched out his hand to us  
We light a light in the name of the Spirit,  
    who encompasses the world and blesses our souls with yearning  
We light three lights for the trinity of love:  
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us:  
the beginning, the end, the everlasting one.

**CANTICLE: SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD**

Jesus, Saviour of the world,  
come to us in your mercy:  
we look to you to save and help us.  
By your cross and your life laid down,  
you set your people free:  
we look to you to save and help us.  
When they were ready to perish,  
you saved your disciples:  
we look to you to come to our help.  
In the greatness of your mercy,  
loose us from our chains:  
forgive the sins of all your people.  
Make yourself known as our saviour  
and mighty deliverer:  
save and help us that we may praise you.  
Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus:  
hear our prayer and be with us always.  
And when you come in your glory:  
make us to be one with you  
and to share the life of your kingdom.

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

My brothers and sisters, not out of dread and fear, but believing that God is faithful to forgive, let us rid ourselves of what we need to carry no longer.

Merciful God, we have sinned in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done.

We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.

We are truly sorry. We repent and turn to you.

Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ's sake, and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen

May God forgive you, Christ befriend you,  
and the Spirit renew you and change your life. Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, giver of life and health,  
whose Son Jesus Christ has called us to hunger and thirst for justice:  
refresh us with your grace,  
that we may not be weary in well-doing,  
for the sake of him who meets all our needs,  
Jesus Christ our Saviour;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO

**PART 2** — AN ALL AGE VIDEO PART 4 OF *WHERE IS GOD?* FOCUSSED ON FINDING GOD IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN [HERE](#)

**PART 3** — LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE [SERMON PODCAST](#) (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE, AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS, TODAY BY LIBBY PATERSON

## READINGS

Romans 9:1-8

Psalm 145:8-9, 14-18

Matthew 14:1-21

**SERMON BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE**

**Available to listen online and/or download – access via Pentecost 2020 link and notice also a reasonable library of past sermons for you to listen to as you exercise or meditate...**

Matthew 14:1-21

*Let us pray:*

*Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word; open our hearts and our minds to your Spirit as we reflect and pray. Amen.*

Usually in mid-winter, I plan to go on a retreat which means going somewhere quiet, away from the noise and distractions to have time to process, to pray and take stock of life.

Obviously, I can't do that this year, or at the present time. I guess many of us would like to detach ourselves from the current scene and be elsewhere.

Scripture records a number of occasions of people retreating to a quiet place, sometimes fleeing into a desert where the person seeks out God and God's guidance for what to do next.

This is what is happening here with Jesus. He has just heard about the awful execution of John the Baptist in whose footsteps he is following. What has happened to John, is quite likely to happen to Jesus also. That is the writing on the wall Jesus needs to think about, so he withdraws, he takes himself off in a boat alone to a deserted place. We might wonder, did he go to be safe? Did he go because he was in a state of shock?

What we have is that Jesus needed to be by himself, even without his disciples. Perhaps he needed to detach.

If, in taking the boat, Jesus was hoping to throw his followers off his tracks, it didn't work. A crowd found their way to him on foot. Maybe they too were escaping from the authorities. Maybe they were also in shock of John's death and in need of Jesus' leadership?

Whatever the reason, here was Jesus in the wilderness facing a crowd who were facing him. And he had compassion on them, and he moved among them and started to heal those who were sick.

It is important to set this scene in its surrounding context. What follows is not some miracle just produced out of thin air. What happens next is extremely symbolic and so full of meaning and truth,

that it is the only miracle that all four gospels record. John's gospel follows it with the great discourse on the bread from heaven.

The times in the wilderness for God's people, collectively or individually, are quite significant. The wilderness is the place of the beginning for the Jewish faith when God led Abram and Sarai on their journey. Isaac lived in the wilderness as did Esau. Jacob was not so good at it but he learned as he wrestled with God, which earned him the name Israel meaning *one who strives with God and humans and prevails*. Moses lived forty years in the wilderness in exile from Egypt and found God there. Then the people of Israel followed Moses into the wilderness and wrestled with God there. As did some centuries later, King David and prophets like Elijah. A lot of spiritual honing goes on in the wilderness.

Jesus' path from this place is going to be increasingly difficult. As Matthew continues his gospel, the conflict between Jesus and the authorities intensifies. Jesus starts warning his followers of the opposition they will encounter as they follow in his footsteps. He warns them of false religion and spirituality. There are choices of life and death ahead of him and his followers. So, what happens next, here in the wilderness is important.

In the evening Jesus' disciples, first we hear of them, come to him. Had they come with the crowd, or independently later? They are concerned for Jesus' wellbeing and suggests he send the crowd away to buy some food.

Jesus has a reaction to their suggestion. 'The crowd need not go away; **you** give them something to eat.'

We often think of this as Jesus' miracle, of Jesus providing enough food for everyone. But notice how this all starts, by him telling his disciples that **they** have the resources to feed the crowd. This is in all four gospels. The small resources of five loaves and two fish are reverently offered to God as Jesus demonstrates the rite of giving thanks, **he looked up to heaven**, then blessing and breaking the bread he then gave them **back** to his disciples for them to share the food out.

What a significant rite to share in that place, in that context. And all ate, and all were filled. And the broken pieces left over, filled twelve baskets – the disciples were given the job of collecting that as well - nothing was wasted. There was enough and more, for there are more people out there who are hungry.

The journey that lay ahead for Jesus and his followers cannot be undertaken without the sustenance only God can provide. This beautiful story tells us of a God who provides for our needs, both physical and spiritual. A God who draws people together for support and encouragement. A God who is generous towards us and through us.

The church, in God's name, asks its people to give, to serve, and to love generously. You are asked to step out in faith, to believe that God will provide and equip.

Not in the way of something falling out of the sky, but seeing what is in your hands, what is in your capacity, which goes much further than what any of us can ever dream. It is more than attitude. Like seeing the glass half full instead of half empty. Of seeing not problems, but opportunity.

We all have the times of running on empty, feeling worn out and tired and nothing left to give. Jesus was in this way at the beginning of this story. The temptation is to jealously protect our remaining energy and resources. Instead, Jesus suggests we take what little we have, bless God, break it and give it away, and find there is far more leftover than what was started with. It is the abundant economy of God, and it is the road to fullness of life.

Do you have enough, an abundance, or a surplus?  
You might be surprised!

*Let us pray,  
Merciful God,  
the gifts we bring are so small in comparison to the vast needs in our world—  
nowhere near enough to save the thousands dying of starvation around the world,  
the cure for so many contagious with the corona virus,  
or even to meet the needs of simply those in our locality.  
Yet we offer what we have.  
As You once multiplied the five small loaves and two fish,  
multiply these gifts as well, so that, once again, the hungry may receive all they need, and more.  
Amen.*

## INTERCESSIONS BY LIBBY PATERSON

Compassionate God, we remember that often your disciples were afraid when confronted by the events and situations placed before them. At these times you touched them and encouraged them to trust in you. Lord, hear our prayers for those for whom we pray, and by your great mercy touch them, and these situations with your love and grace.

Loving God, your desire is for our wholeness and wellbeing. We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time. We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened. We ache for ourselves and our neighbours, standing before an unknown future.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. Be with doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and put themselves at risk in the process. May they all know your protection and constant presence.

God of Compassion. Help us during this time of isolation and fear and give us the courage to remain faithful and strong. Guide us to the people and tasks neglected by our busyness. Allow this time, gifted to us by staying home, to be used to form stronger relationships and connections with our families, friends, communities and the earth, which you have granted us. Through our physical distance may we find new ways to act in love, solidarity and unity as we journey onwards together in faith and hope.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world: God of mercy, give our elected leaders wisdom of heart in decision-making that the common good of our human family may be achieved, and that the gift of each person's human dignity may be respected and honoured. May the leaders make decisions whereby all resources are fairly, equitably and justly distributed during this time of the pandemic. We pray for peaceful solutions and respectful dialogue between all world leaders during this time of political uncertainty. Holy Spirit, hover over these conversations and imbue wise decision making and sound prudence.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church: We remember those who are persecuted or imprisoned for their beliefs. God of love and strength, be with those who suffer for their faith. We pray for the church in distant lands, where people are suffering from devastating effects of the pandemic. Strengthen the church members to care for and support the sick, the dying and the oppressed.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they gain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbours from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no bounds.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have recently died from the virus. Grant them rest and a place in your eternal safe keeping, in that place where life knows not age, and the reward that ever lasts. May the souls of all the faithful, remembering Liz Roylance on the anniversary of her death, departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Stay with us as we endure, persist and journey. May your powerful closeness to us transform our fear into hope. May the fire of love, energy and resilience burn within our hearts so that we may give witness to the mystery of your resurrected life among us and within us.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray:

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.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

**PLEASE RESUME THE VIDEO FOR HOLY COMMUNION**

GREETING OF PEACE

We are the body of Christ.  
His Spirit is with us.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.  
Accept and use our offerings for your glory  
and for the service of your kingdom.  
Blessed be God for ever.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you,  
And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts;  
We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We offer you praise, dear God, and hearts lifted high,  
for in the communion of your love  
Christ comes close to us  
and we come close to Christ.  
Therefore with the whole realm of nature around us,  
with earth, sea and sky, we sing to you.  
with all the saints before and beside us, we sing to you.  
we join in the song of your unending greatness.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is our brother Jesus,  
who walks with us the road of our world's suffering,  
and who is known to us in the breaking of bread.  
On the night of his arrest Jesus took bread and having blessed it he broke the bread and gave it to  
his disciples, saying, This is my body, given to you.  
In the same way he took wine and having given thanks for it he poured it out and gave the cup to  
his disciples, saying, This cup is the new relationship with God,  
sealed with my blood. Take this and share it. I shall drink wine with you next in the coming  
Kingdom of God.**

**Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.**

**Hear us, O Christ, and breathe your Spirit upon us  
and upon this bread and wine.  
May they become for us your body, vibrant with your life, healing, renewing and making us  
whole.  
And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed  
again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.**

**Blessing and honour and glory and power,  
are yours forever and ever. Amen**

#### **THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE**

**We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  
We who are many are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.**

#### **DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

##### **POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

**Living God,  
in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.  
May the power of your love,  
which we have known in word and sacrament,  
continue your saving work among us,  
give us courage for our pilgrimage,  
and bring us to the joys you promise.**

**Father,  
You sent your Son to bring us truth  
and your Spirit to make us holy;  
open our hearts to exalt you,  
open our lives to reveal you,  
our one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**BLESSING**

**On our hearts and on our houses,  
The blessing of God.  
In our coming and our going,  
The peace of God.  
In our life and our believing,  
The love of God.  
At our end and new beginning,  
Be arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

**Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.**

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