

The hour is late

Notes on the Bible readings

- Surrounded by a crowd of hungry people, Jesus miraculously feeds them all. Jesus actually passes the challenge of feeding the crowd on to the disciples. Their suggestion that the people should be sent to find food is perfectly sensible, but Jesus challenges them to provide what is needed.

- The disciples must have felt utterly incapable of doing what Jesus asked of them, but they faithfully do what they can, and Jesus works a miracle through their efforts. So, there is hope here for all of us who ever feel powerless to do what Jesus is asking of us.

- This passage is a reminder of how God provided manna in the wilderness. Matthew does not labour this, but the fact that he describes the place as a wilderness emphasises the link. The passage from Isaiah also speaks of God's people needing provision in the wilderness. In both there is the stirring of liberation, of the coming together of people for the journey on which God will take them. Both stories talk of God's people being equipped to meet the needs of those around them.

Urgent!

Listen to the song 'O Lord, the clouds are gathering' or Jodi Clark's 'Look around you, can you see'. As you listen, write a list of things for which 'the hour is late' – i.e. that need urgent attention – locally, nationally or internationally, or personally. Then read and reflect on this week's psalm verses: Psalm 145.8-9,14-21.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ Why is there a need to share?
- ▶ What are the best things about joining together with your church community?
- ▶ What would you share with them?



A prayer of approach

Dear God, you look deep inside us, seeing not only our outer but our inner needs. Have compassion on us, we pray. Feed us today from your holy word, and we will be filled. Amen.

A prayer for others

Lord, today, we pray for people who have little or nothing: for those who feel trapped in their situation, and can't see the bigger picture, or even any tiny glimmer of light.

We pray for people who are hungry: for parents who struggle to feed their children, and themselves.

We thank you for the work of food banks, and pray that they would have the resources to continue to meet so many needs.

We pray that you would give us an appreciation of our food: the work that goes into producing and distributing it. Teach us not to be wasteful, but to preserve and pass on the goodness of your earth. Amen.

A personal prayer

Lord, a new week lies ahead of me and I don't really know what it will bring.

Help me to be aware of people around me who are struggling in any way.

May I be sensitive to their needs and seek your wisdom as I come alongside them.

I want to be there for them, Lord, bearing your blessing. Amen.

Live your faith

Write yourself a note to remind you either to give something away or share something with someone else. It doesn't need to be a big or expensive gift, just generous.