

**Eighth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 2nd August 2020**



Dear Friends,

'And all ate and were filled' (Matthew 14: 20)

Last week, our benefice celebrated Holy Communion together for the first time since Lockdown began in March – first at St Stephen's in Sparsholt on Sunday, and also on Wednesday morning at St Catherine's in Littleton. It was a joy to be able to come together in full churches, to worship, and to eat and be fed by Christ.

Looking out at the congregations was, however, as moving as it was disconcerting – so many faithful friends reunited at the Lord's Table, their beautiful and much loved faces obscured by masks! Admittedly, a similarly unusual vision was reciprocated - as communicants received holy bread broken open, from a visor-clad '*Dalek*' formally known as Revd Jax! For all the inconvenience of social 'bubbles' and face-coverings ... Oh! The gift of being bathed in the slow light of the Eucharist.

Our gathering on Wednesday was timely, as Christians across the world celebrated the 'Lesser Festival' of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Dearly loved friends of Jesus, Lazarus was brought back from the dead as a foretaste, both of Jesus' own death and resurrection, but also as a vivid pointer to each of us that, in acknowledging Jesus as our Messiah, and by living spiritual lives rooted in contemplative prayer and faithful action as Mary and Martha typified, we too will know the joy of eternal life.



'Jesus Raises Lazarus' by William Hole

Across history, there have been many Christian people who have exemplified these values. On Thursday, 30th July, the funeral of American Congressman and Civil Rights campaigner, John Lewis, took place at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia - in the church where Martin Luther King, Jr. had been baptized and served as a Pastor, and where his own funeral was held after his assassination in 1968.

John Lewis, rocked by Dr King's death and yet fed by Jesus, continued to devote his life to the Christian principles of spiritual contemplation and action - carrying the struggle against racial discrimination from the battlegrounds of the Southern States in the 1960's to the contemporary halls of Congress in Washington DC, died on Friday, July 17th. He was 80 years old.



1965 - Martin Luther King Jr (4th from left), with John Lewis on far right.
(AP Photo/File)

An extract from Senator John Lewis' memoir *'Across That Bridge - A Vision for Change and the Future of America:'*

Anchor the eternity of love in your own soul and embed this planet with goodness. Lean toward the whispers of your own heart, discover the universal truth, and follow its dictates. Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won.

Choose confrontation wisely, but when it is your time don't be afraid to stand up, speak up, and speak out against injustice. And if you follow your truth down the road to peace and the affirmation of love, if you shine like a beacon for all to see, then the poetry of all the great dreamers and philosophers is yours to manifest in a nation, a world community, and a Beloved Community that is finally at peace with itself.

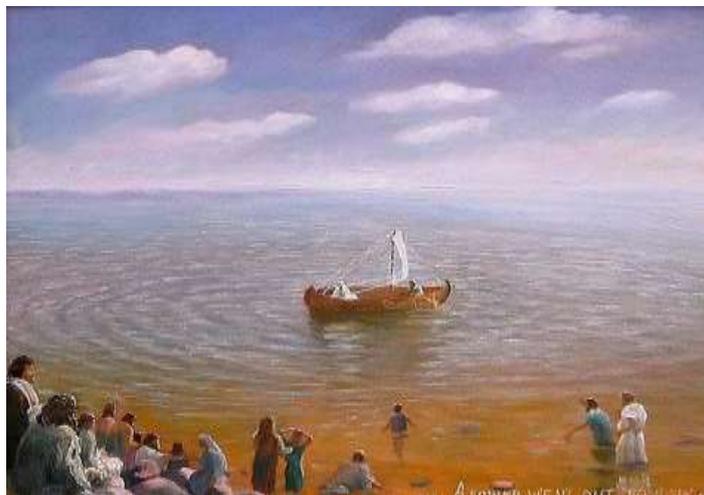
Much for us all to learn from.



'The Raising of Lazarus' by Carl H. Bloch

As the story of Mary, Martha and Lazarus shows us, Jesus himself was no stranger to the deep emotions of loss and grief that John Lewis felt – both for Martin Luther King, Jr. and for the countless black Americans killed for the colour of their skin. We know that Jesus openly wept at the grave of Lazarus and was moved by the sisters' grief for their brother. Though He raised His dear friend from the dead, as we come to our Gospel reading, we find Jesus reeling from the news of John the Baptist's murder.

Instinctively, Jesus takes a boat and sails out onto the Sea of Galilee towards the quiet of Tabgha (at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes at Capernaum), to cleave some time for himself to reflect on the beheading of his beloved cousin and faithful apostle. But even here, Jesus is mindful of the needs of the many thousands of people He can see gathering along the shore-line to be with Him and listen to His teachings. Laying aside His own grief, Jesus returns to the ministry to which He was called. We hear how Jesus *'had compassion for them and cured their sick.'* As with the raising of Lazarus in reassuring us of our eternal security, so here Jesus shows us how His compassionate love will always be with us, throughout the trials and sufferings of our earthly lives.



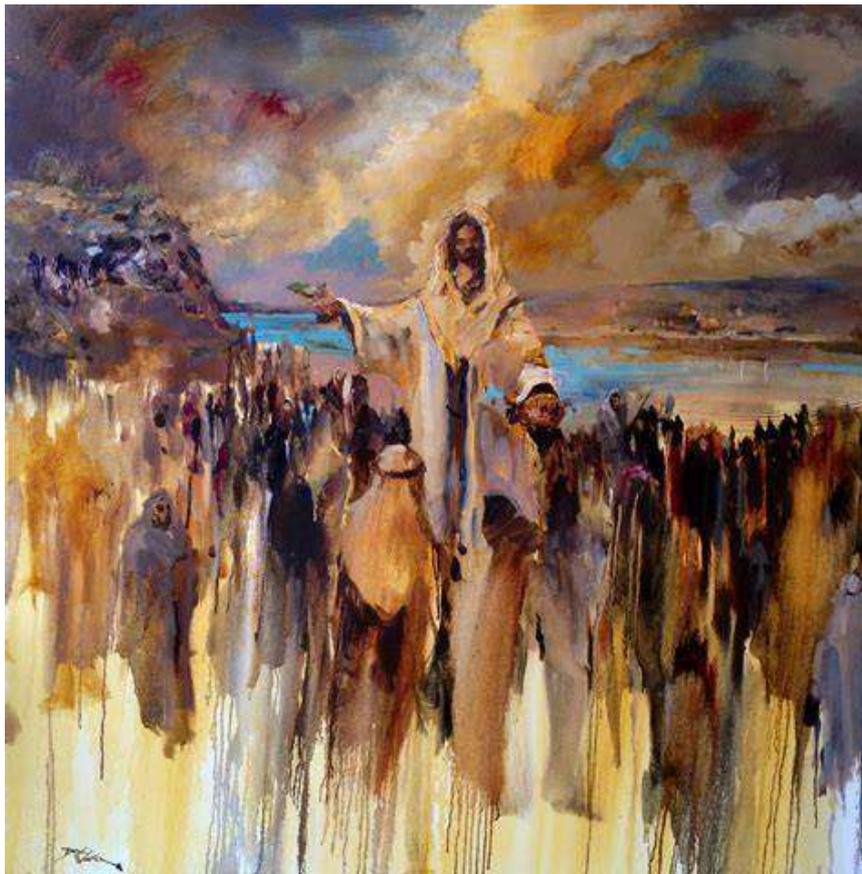
'Jesus Teaching on the Sea of Galilee' by Carolyn Ann Steward

The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is found in each of the four Gospels, making it one of the best known of Jesus' miracles, and shows us how much the experience affected the hearts and minds of all who witnessed this extraordinary event. These accounts record that there were thousands of men, women and children (though only the numbers of men were recorded) who had left their homes and villages and walked many miles to hear Jesus speak, without any care for food or shelter. It becomes clear to us that these people instinctively knew their need of Jesus and were prepared to spend their time and energy looking for Him and listening to Him, bringing Him their problems and seeking His healing, whatever the personal cost.

And what did Jesus do?

He was there for them. Ready to heal the sick among them. Ready to reassure them of God's love for them, teaching them how they could become closer to God. And, having fed them spiritually, He fed them physically.... And all he used was all they had. That's what Jesus always does.

To this day, pilgrims still flock to the place where Jesus performed the miracle of the feeding of so many people. The modern Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha, stands on the site of a 4th-century church, displaying Byzantine mosaic decorations that are among the most beautiful in the Holy Land.



'Feeding of the 5000' by Dirk A. Walker

God's work through Jesus in feeding some 5,000 people was only a foretaste of what was to come to fruition at the Cross – where Jesus gave of Himself in order to nourish the whole world.

Jesus' sharing of bread from the land and fish from the sea, shows us how we must use the earth's resources to feed its people equally, rather than allowing elite groups to hoard it all. The crowds were fed by what originally looked like a meagre amount, insufficient to feed the hungry hoards. Yet, through this divine example, we learn how, when we give of ourselves to Jesus everything we have and everything we are, Jesus uses our gifts and multiplies them in the world.

Jesus leads us by His own perfect example to understand that both our own planet and even our own lives are not ours to control. Once again, as He has been doing through the series of parables we have been reading these past weeks after Trinity, Jesus is teaching us to honour and co-operate with God, who first gave everything to us.



Senator John Lewis 'The Living Saint' honoured with the Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2011 (ALEX WONG, AFP/File)

Jesus is with us in the most fundamental of ways, in everything we eat, the air that we breathe, and the blessings and trials of our lives. It was a truth by which Senator John Lewis lived his life, determined to give of himself to defend the civil rights of the vulnerable and weak, the poor and weak, subjugated by the powerful and wealthy in our modern times, just as those who gathered around Jesus on the shore at Tabgha.

Dr. Kathleen Hall writes of John Lewis: *'He was always kind, gentle, accepting, and one of the most exceptional listeners ever born. You couldn't be around John without experiencing his emanating grace, light, love, and truth when you were in his presence. He lived out the Gospel every day of his life.'*

Like John Lewis, we also need to realize that we are each part of the unimaginable 'eternity of love' which God, unleashed on the world – both in Jesus and then, through the Holy Spirit to us and *through* us: *'And all ate and were filled'*

Yours in the generosity of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Remember that our churches are open for daily prayer and for Sunday services - please see our website for more details at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

Short-Term Schedule for the reintroduction of Sunday services in The Downs Benefice – 2nd to 30th August 2020

	2 nd August	9 th August	16 th August	23 rd August	30 th August
Chilbolton	HC 10am		MP 10am		
Crawley					
Littleton				HC 10am	
Sparsholt	Closed	MP 10am			
Wherwell				Closed	H C 10am

I hope this table is self-explanatory, but if you do have any queries, please contact the **Benefice Office** on **(01962) 880845** or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Box for Socks: Don't forget there is a collection box in **St Catherine's Church porch** and at **each Sunday service** for you to donate **NEW**



pairs of socks for men and women to be distributed to Winchester Nightshelter to support the 'Foot Health' programme for the hungry and homeless people on our streets.

Unfortunately, used socks cannot be accepted, only new ones. Any size welcome. Thank you!

Collect Prayer for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection, both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Matthew 14: 13-21 - Feeding the Five Thousand

Jesus withdrew 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.