

## **Worship Outline including Reflection for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity**

### **Opening Verse of Scripture Ephesians 3.20**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

### **Collect: Prayer for the Day**

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **First Reading: 2 Kings 2.42-44**

A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to 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?' So he repeated, 'Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the Lord, "They shall eat and have some left."' He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.

### **Second Reading: Ephesians 3.14-22**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Gospel Reading: John 6.1-21**

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who

has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.' When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

### **Reflection**

#### **'For this reason I bow my knees before the Father'**

This weekend we will focus on the epistle reading. The theologian S.T. Coleridge described the letter to the Ephesians as the "queen of the epistles." This is well justified because it is a marvellously concise yet comprehensive guide to Christian faith and practise. Although the letter declares itself to be by the apostle Paul, scholars from the early nineteenth century onwards pointed out that the vocabulary and style of the epistle was not the same as other epistles from Paul. Although the evidence that they produce to support this theory is strong, does it matter? Could it not be that some other brilliant writer took Paul's words and précised them at a later date, rather than copy down every word from Paul's letter? The theology of the letter is exactly in line with Paul's teachings.

Ephesus was a former Greek colony. By Paul's time it was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. As a port, Ephesus was a meeting place for many cultures and religions. It even contained one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the great temple of Artemis (Diana). Paul had visited there and caused a great upset to the cult of Diana which had a valuable trade in selling little silver models of the temple. Paul was thus addressing a church planted right in the heart of a powerful pagan culture.

The excerpt from his letter, which we read this morning, deals with a concept which is powerful and central to the Christian faith. Put simply it is this: God is not in a building, a Temple, whether the Great Temple of Solomon or any other, He is not far away in Heaven, He is close to us, closer than close, in the souls of those who believe in Him. This great promise comes through the love of the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This weekend's reading is in the form of a prayer for the faith of the people of Ephesus to be deepened. The miracle of love has made Christ dwell in their hearts, it is for them to try to understand the implications of this "indwelling". By accepting Christ into their lives, at their conversion, they had allowed Him to enter into their hearts and minds. But what does that mean? By turning back to the original Greek used by Paul we get a clearer picture of what he was trying to say in this phrase of God dwelling within them.

There were two similar Greek verbs *paroikeo* and *katoikeo* that he could have chosen to express the concept. The first *paroikeo* means merely to inhabit a place as a stranger. He chose to use the second word, *katoikeo* which means to settle permanently. What Paul was insisting was that God was not a fleeting visitor in the soul of the believer, a presence which would fade away, but a permanent resident, a faithful and abiding presence in the lives of those who had welcomed him.

What difference does such an idea make to our idea of God's relationship with us? If God dwells within us, why sometimes do we feel so far from Him? Here is the challenge for us. What can we do to keep that miraculous closeness of God a living reality in our spiritual lives? If we can answer this question then we will happily bow our knees before God our Father, because we have a real reason to do it. Amen.

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Holy Father, who gathered us here around the table of your Son to share this meal with the whole household of God: in that new world where you reveal the fullness of your peace, gather people of every race and language to share in the eternal banquet of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.