

**Bulletin for Sunday 18th July 2021**

Good Morning, Friends. I hope you've been enjoying the sunshine.

\*\*\*\* **Please see the end of this Bulletin for notices.**

Let's pause as we prepare to worship..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Morning has broken (R&S 45)

Prayer: Loving God, creator of each new day,  
we praise you for the blackbird and for the morning,  
for gardens, parks, fields - wherever we encounter you...  
Help us to slow down and appreciate your creation  
as we take time to worship you this morning...  
We ask your blessing on everything we do,  
and everything we give in your service,  
now and always.  
We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Psalm 23 and Mark chapter 6 verses 30-34 and 53-56

Reflection: That's the trouble with a lake, of course - people can travel round the edge on foot, and catch up with you. Especially if they are locals with a shrewd idea where your boat is heading... Imagine the frustration of trying to get away to find some overdue peace and rest, and then being followed by crowds of people. Not hostile crowds, but very needy people, who seemed impossible to shake off.

Jesus was conflicted between wanting (and needing) to get away to a quiet place where he and his disciples could rest and talk through their recent experiences... and yet on the other hand also feeling deep compassion for the crowds of people who were looking to him for guidance, leadership and healing. In these verses it is the needs of the shepherd-less people which win out, and we see a tired Jesus continuing to minister to them: both teaching and healing, as they flocked to him. But at the same time Jesus did show an awareness of the need to rest, to eat, and to find the right balance in life. He may have allowed himself to be detained by the many sick and spiritually-hungry folk who desperately craved his attention, but once he had tended to their need, we are told in verse 46 that he dismissed the crowd and went up a mountain to pray.

Jesus understood that sometimes looking after yourself - and that includes both rest and spending time with God in prayer and reflection - is essential. We need to follow his example: to find a balance between work and rest; and to set time aside to listen to God.

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind (R&S 492)

Prayer: Compassionate Christ, who understood the needs of every member of the crowd, and of each disciple... we bring to you our prayers for all who long for peace: for those caught up in places of conflict and violence; for those exhausted by work or caring responsibilities; for those enmeshed in anxiety, fear or depression.... Compassionate Christ, we bring you our concerns: for our communities, those we love, those we worry about... hear all our prayers, spoken and unspoken. Amen

Hymn: The King of love my shepherd is (R&S 552)

Blessing: Through all the length of days  
God's goodness faileth never. May we remember that;  
and may the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and with all those we love  
now and always. Amen

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Your Elders, who have responsibility for safety and for worship in our churches, will be meeting this week to consider the latest government advice, the latest URC advice ( <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3872-new-freedoms-same-responsibilities-synod-moderators-advice-to-congregations> ) and various other items of business. Please hold them in prayer.

Next Sunday morning (25th July) will be a Group Service - the first for about 18 months - at Pulborough. We are hoping the weather will allow us to worship, and celebrate being together once again, outside on the lawn; final details next week.

Morning worship in our churches is at 10.30am. Please remember masks and social distancing and that congregational singing still isn't allowed.

The evening 'Sunday at Six' service, with hymns, is on Zoom at 6pm.

And the best chances to chat are at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms!

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