

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

All four gospels record the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. John 6 tells us that Jesus used only five small loaves of bread, and two fish to feed all these people. What struck me this week, is that Jesus fed these people before they brought their tithes and offerings. They were fed before they had served God in any way. They were fed before making any faith commitment. Before they had done anything, or said anything, Jesus feeds them. Here is not just a remarkable miracle, but yet again, another example of the grace of God, the undeserved favour of God.

Father, thank you for continuing to seek us out, continuing to want to show us Your grace. Thank you for sending Jesus, the Messiah, this greatest ever act of grace. We are so grateful for all that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection achieved. So can we ask Holy Spirit, as we head towards Communion at the end of the service, where we remember Jesus, where we remember grace, that You would help us to worship with gratefulness and thanks.

Thank you for this time together. Please bless this time and this space, Amen.

Baptist Call to Prayer - Week 1

Responsive Prayer: Radical for Jesus.

Written by Odele Habets, Senior Pastor, Albany Baptist

Leader: God our Father, you have called us to be Your people and welcomed us into your family.

All: Father, make us a people who live for your glory and your Kingdom.

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you promised that where two or three gather in your name, you are present among them.

All: Jesus, draw us close to you and make us radical in our love and obedience.

Leader: Holy Spirit, fill us afresh with your power and presence.

All: Spirit of God, transform us into the likeness of Christ.

Leader: Father, as a local Baptist church, teach us to devote ourselves to your Word.

All: May we hunger for your truth and delight in your ways.

Leader: Lord Jesus, as the early believers devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread,

All: Build us into a Christ-centred community marked by grace, generosity, and joy. May our life together reveal the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Leader: Father, you sent your Son to bring good news to the poor and hope to the broken.

All: Open our eyes to see the needs around us.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you proclaimed freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and the year of the Lord's favour.

All: Send us to serve our neighbours with courage, compassion, and humility.

Leader: Holy Spirit, empower us for mission.

All: Make us radical in love, radical in justice, and radical in sharing the gospel.

Leader: Father, we pray for the Baptist churches across our region.

All: Unite us in your love and purpose.

Leader: Lord Jesus, as one body under one Lord, help us encourage and strengthen one another.

All: May we work together for the growth of Your Kingdom.

Leader: Holy Spirit, pour out fresh vision, wisdom, and courage upon every congregation.

All: Raise up disciples and leaders who faithfully follow Christ.

Leader: Father, we pray for Baptist churches throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

All: Renew your Church in this land.

Leader: Lord Jesus, may your name be honoured in every town and city.

All: Draw many people to faith and new life in You.

Leader: Holy Spirit, awaken Your people to prayer, mission, and discipleship.

All: May our nation experience the transforming love of God.

Leader: Father, we pray for the Church throughout the world.

All: Gather people from every tribe, language, and nation into your family.

Leader: Lord Jesus, strengthen those who suffer for your name.

All: Grant them perseverance, hope, and peace.

Leader: Holy Spirit, continue to empower Your people to witness to Christ in every place.

Leader: Father, all things come from You.

All: We offer our lives back to You.

Leader: Lord Jesus, all things hold together in You.

All: We follow you as our Saviour, Lord, and King.

Leader: Holy Spirit, all life is sustained by You.

ALL: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, make us a radical people—gathered in Christ's presence, devoted to one another, and sent into the world with your good news. Amen.

[Message - Ants in the Bread](#)

As we knowingly and gratefully receive God's grace, may that extend from us uncorrupted.

For me, buying a loaf of bread is a treat. Seriously it is! Because I bake my own. Or the breadmaking machine does. So two Friday's back, I had a treat. I was at Knead Bakery in Hokowhitu, and I looked at their variety of loaves, sour dough and ciabatta. I'm a little partial to ciabatta, and one of them had dark chocolate, walnuts, and more cranberries. It was perfect!

Down at the Esplanade I left the loaf in the boot of the car while I enjoyed the peace and the trees, along with a pie and a cinnamon scroll that somehow had left the bakery with me. I like things in threes. Anyway, I was not aware of what was going on in the car. Perhaps it was the aroma of the bread, I don't know, but when I returned an hour later, the packet and the bread were covered, in, ants! The cost of the loaf immediately came to mind! What a waste! No way!

When I got home I blew, banged, and wiped the loaf to get all the little blighters off. Then a couple of slices went into the toaster. Now, what happened next, I didn't expect. The hollowness of the loaf meant

the ants had gone through the loaf, they were in the middle of the loaf, they were not just on the outside. And guess what? After being toasted, as I put the toasted slices on a plate, two more very alive ants scuttled out. I wonder if they noticed their climate changing?

No matter how good it looked on the outside, the problem was still in the centre. The same with white washed walls. The same with our own lives, and the life of the church. When we are distracted away from what matters most, Jesus, the ants continue to find what they're looking for.

Acts 22:30-23:11 (NIV - UK)
Paul before the Sanhedrin

30 The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and set him before them.

1 Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, 'My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.' 2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!'

4 Those who were standing near Paul said, 'How dare you insult God's high priest!'

5 Paul replied, 'Brothers, I did not realise that he was the high priest; for it is written: "Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people." [a]'

6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, 'My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' 7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

9 There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. 'We find nothing wrong with this man,' they said. 'What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?' 10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, 'Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.'

Footnotes

Acts 23:5 Exodus 22:28

May God bless these words to our hearts and minds.

Here is just a simple story. Or is it? I'm struck by two things in these verses, maybe three. Firstly, who acts most like God? Is it Paul where he seems to lose it at the high priest? Well surely not. Who else is there? The members of the Sanhedrin certainly would like to think that they are being like God, making decisions for God. Yet, in their attitudes and behaviour, they are not being like God.

Who else is there? What about the commander, a Roman. Here for the third time the commander rescues Paul. The first time Paul did not deserve it. The commander thought he was an Egyptian terrorist, THE Egyptian terrorist. It's surprising that the Romans didn't lynch him on the spot. The commander for some

reason showed Paul grace. He doesn't know Paul, Paul has done nothing for him, but he acts in a grace like way.

The commander rescues Paul a second time, a few verses later, again showing grace, and saving Paul's life. This time he thought he was saving a Jewish guy. For a Roman, this was hardly worthy of worrying about. But he does. Very God like if you ask me. It's surprising, and grace like.

And again here, in our verses today, the commander steps in. To be fair, he now knows that Paul is a Roman citizen, so he has a bit more reason to look after him, but again, why would it matter if the Sanhedrin pull him to pieces? Again, not the Sanhedrin, but a Roman commander shows Paul grace, undeserved favour.

How is this significant? It's a challenge. It shows us that when God shows us grace, it is possible for us to show, to extend grace to others. In fact, we must. We must love the unlovely. We must not store up grudges. As God has extended grace to us, we must extend that same grace to others. If it is possible for a Roman, who might have had no interest or knowledge in Jesus, to act like this, then, what about us?

The second thing that strikes me, is the uproar that that Council gets itself into. This was the Sanhedrin, the highest religious court in the land. It contained both Sadducees and Pharisees, but the Sadducees held the power. It's like American politics. Republicans and Democrats.

The surprising thing is that they have been summoned by the Roman commander. He clearly has some power and authority. The high priest is certainly doing as he is told. They gather, and Paul is brought before them. Far from a weak puppy with its tail between its legs, Paul addresses the Sanhedrin with confidence, and without fear.

Like the disciples who fled when Jesus was arrested, suddenly after Jesus' resurrection they became fearless and bold. The same Jesus appeared to Paul, and he also knows, that he has nothing to fear.

So we wonder about what Paul says to the Sanhedrin, is he baiting them? Is he trying to cause a riot?

No, in fact what Paul is wanting to do here, is boldly help them with the charges they have against him. The problem that they have with Paul, is that Paul believes not just in Jesus, but in the risen Jesus. He has hope in and belief in, the resurrection of the dead. This is Paul's witness and his testimony. Jesus is alive, death did not hold him, He is risen, bodily risen, and has ascended to heaven until the time is right to return to restore the earth.

Some of the Pharisees have no issue with the possibility of Jesus rising again. But for the Sadducees, this can not be. And so they are not united, but divided in belief.

What is this a picture of? Sadly, too many churches, too many denominations, who take their eyes off what matters most. Which is Jesus. Fighting over things that are of secondary importance. We've got to unite over what is of utmost importance, and shrug our shoulders over the rest. Otherwise the ants get in.

And then you can see where the picture of the bread comes in? We can look so smart and powerful on the outside, but we can actually be rotten on the inside. This is even more than the 'white washed wall' comment, to the high priest, however much it was appropriate to that high priest.

Let's not be in uproar, or in dissent over matters that are minor. Let's be in agreement in all things about Jesus.

Oh, and as we knowingly and gratefully receive God's grace, may that extend from us uncorrupted.

Finally, in the last verse, God speaks to Paul, and affirms him. How good must this have felt? He can continue in the confidence of v1, with nothing to fear. May we know that same assurance.