

Enough to go round



Gracious God, help us focus afresh on the essentials – on teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and on prayer. Give us glad generous hearts, that your Church may proclaim that life in all its fullness which you show us in Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray – ACTS of prayer Part 4 – S is for supplication

by Kathryn Fleming

“Give us this day our daily bread”. Supplication is written into our most basic prayer template. Jesus tells us that our heavenly Father delights to give his children good gifts – not always what we ask for, but surely what we need. So we ask for ourselves, for others, for the whole world.

If it's how we build our relationship with God, then to pray in supplication is another exercise in retuning our will and

expectations to match God's. We learn, little by little, to trust that though our will and God's may not be the same, nonetheless God is giving good gifts when we ask in faith.

Rowan Williams clarifies: “You don't send in your list of requests, or bombard God with your demands... You just hold the image and sense of a person in the presence of God... and let one seep into another.”

As we pray in “supplication with thanksgiving”, we do so knowing God is at work. 😊

“To confess your sins to God is not to tell God anything God doesn't already know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the... bridge.”

Frederick Buechner (born 1926), American writer, novelist, poet, preacher and theologian

Kathryn Fleming *reflects on Acts 2:42-end and John 10:1-10*

It's an ironic truth that the Acts account of those exemplary New Testament Christians tends to make me anything but an exemplary Christian! Honestly, just thinking about their perfect community, holding all things in common, giving alms, celebrating God's goodness day by day, turns me into a green-eyed monster. Not only did they have the ideal church – but it was growing too, which isn't necessarily the case for churches we know and love. And of course, it was because of how they modelled authentic Christian community, reflecting God's love in every aspect of life that the Church grew. Even if you don't experience signs and wonders, unmistakable evidence of God at work in ordinary people is pretty irresistible.

So where does that leave us? It's easy to think “That was then, this is now” and plod onwards, trying to avoid painful comparisons. But there's a challenge. Jesus calls us to life in all its fullness – freedom from both the confines of a narrow religion of “thou shalt not” and from the anxious search for security in material possessions or personal status, which can never satisfy. Those early Christians were able to be generous because they understood that with God there's always enough to go round. They recognised that we often find God most easily in other people, so they treasured their community. And they knew that to practise God's praise come what may, can be a route towards a transformed life. That's still true – and something to rejoice in. 😊

Food in the Bible

Bread

by Caroline Fletcher

Bread was a staple of the biblical diet. Loaves were often large, round and only a few centimetres thick, so they were broken rather than cut just as Jesus broke the bread at the Last Supper.

As is the case today, bread was usually made from wheat, although poor people used barley, which is what the loaves used to feed the five thousand were made from (John 6:9).

Yeast was sourced by saving a small amount of fermented dough from each batch to include in the next. The woman described mixing yeast into flour in one of Jesus' parables (Luke 13:21) would have done just this. However, during Passover, Jews were forbidden from using yeast at all and were instructed to eat only unleavened flatbread. This type of bread is quicker to make not needing time to rise, reminding the Israelites of how they had to eat in haste before fleeing from Egypt. 😊