

## Enough for everyone! (Mark 6: 30-44)

### *Feeding the Five Thousand*

*30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. <sup>33</sup>Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup>As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. <sup>35</sup>When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; <sup>36</sup>send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' <sup>37</sup>But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' <sup>38</sup>And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.' <sup>39</sup>Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup>So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. <sup>41</sup>Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup>And all ate and were filled; <sup>43</sup>and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup>Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.*

(Translation © Lawrence Moore, *Mark for Missional Disciples*, Walking the Walk Publications, 2018)

## Commentary

### **Good News for people on the edge (Mark 6: 30-44/2 Kings 4: 42-44)**

Bread. Feeding. Super-abundance. Exodus. Wilderness. Eucharist. It is interesting that the Lectionary (Pentecost 8B) includes 2 Kings 4: 42-44 – Elisha feeding one hundred men during a famine. Mark deliberately echoes the Elisha story: people who are desperate for food are fed by God through the prophet; here, people desperate for food are fed by Jesus.

Look at Mark's presentation of Jesus in his account of the feeding. The "crowds" are the poor people of the region; the economically helpless. They are the ones for whom life is fragile, and who live constantly on the edge of extinction. These are the people for whom a bad harvest signals disaster, and for whom daily bread literally

means the difference between life and death. The inclusion of 2 Kings 4: 42-44 in the Lectionary readings is not only because of the obvious parallels of feeding crowds with a few loaves of barley (it seems clear that the gospel writers consciously evoke parallels between Jesus and Elijah/Elisha), but also because of the *context*. In the story, all this takes place in Gilgal during a famine. This is what makes the first-fruits offering so precious and costly: in a time of famine, every grain is vital! The man from Baal-shalishah nonetheless offers the first-fruits to Yahweh (just as the boy hands over his entire lunch to Jesus), and as a result, *Yahweh* feeds far, far more people than expected!

Mark's Jesus consciously evokes the Elisha story. The point, though, is to stress that one *greater* than Elisha is here. Whereas Elisha fed a hundred men, Jesus feeds five thousand. Whereas Elisha is confirmed as a prophet of Yahweh by providing food in the midst of famine, Jesus ushers in a new economic order.

The feast of bread and fish in Mark's telling does more than simply evoke associations with Yahweh's provision in the wilderness. This is a Jewish feeding, and Mark will go on to describe the Gentile feeding of the four thousand (8: 1-10). Whereas scholars have concentrated on whether or not the second feeding is simply a re-run of the first, they have missed the political point that Mark makes. The parallels with the Exodus mean that this is the new messianic community – the new Israel.

By including the *Gentile* feeding, Mark stresses that this is a new *world* order – an order in which the poor are fed with daily bread. And it is an order based on *sharing*. The food is provided by a young boy, who offers his packed lunch. The generosity of the donor (as in the Elisha story) is matched by God's super-abundant provision. There is enough for all – more than enough!

We need to recognise that the issue in both stories is not the discomfort of hunger, but the threat of starvation. The audiences in both narratives are people “on the edge” – those for whom the next meal is a matter of constant question and

anxiety. These are the same people who pray the Lord's Prayer: "Give us bread for today!" They are the people whose survival for the next 24 hours depends on God's provision, because every other source of "bread for today" has dried up. Significantly, it means that compassion among those who could answer their prayer has dried up too!

If we are pulled up short by this thought, because we have always somehow spiritualised this petition (ie interpreted it as a prayer for "spiritual" bread), we know that we are not among the economic group to whom Jesus gave this prayer and whose precarious situation and dependence on God he himself shared. And it's probably also a sign that we are out of touch with the lives of those for whom "Give us bread for today!" is a desperate prayer for survival.

That is not to say that Jesus does not give "Spiritual bread" (or, to use John's terms, "the Bread which comes down from heaven/The Bread of Life"). Jesus' compassion for the crowd - his motivation for the miracle - includes "They were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). The feeding/daily bread is *not only* physical bread to sustain physical life; the crucial point is that it is never less than the means necessary to sustain the life of the poorest and most vulnerable. No wonder Jesus is such Good News to the very poorest ... and such an uncomfortable challenge to those of us whose food wrestlings are not where to get the next mouthful, but how to deal with the obesity and eating disorders that are symptomatic of excess!

There is a fundamental truth here about global poverty and starvation. There is enough to go round! God has created a fruitful world, in which there is more than enough for everyone – provided we are prepared to share equally! The problem is that our global economy *creates* widespread starvation on the one hand, and problems with obesity on the other.

The problem is extraordinarily simple. It is an absence of compassion. What motivates Jesus is compassion for the crowds. The disciples place a monetary value on the food required. It is economically too expensive even to consider feeding such

a crowd. The hard-heartedness of the disciples is contrasted with the open generosity of the boy who shares his food freely. This is the new messianic world – a world in which Jesus’ prayer for daily bread for all is answered. The challenge for us is to recognise the failure of compassion that traps the world in deadly cycles of starvation and eating disorders. On the one hand, sharing will eradicate poverty. But equal sharing will mean an end to excessive consumerism, and so eradicate the problems with food common in our bloated, capitalist First World.

### **Eucharist and mission**

For those of us who usually follow the Lectionary, Year B breaks at this point from Mark’s narrative to look at John’s gospel (John 6: 1-21). It is worth spending a few moments looking at John, because his point is relevant for us today: the Christian church is a eucharistic community; Jesus’ declaration of a new economic order means that we who take and eat the Bread of Life *must* engage with the structures of poverty and starvation in the world we inhabit.

The Eucharistic shaping of John’s narrative is unmistakable. In John 6:11 Jesus *takes* the bread, *gives thanks*, *breaks* and *gives*. The four Eucharistic actions, described in detail in Jesus’ treatment of the bread, demand that we link this feeding miracle symbolically with the Eucharist. We are drawn into the nexus of relationships between Eucharist and the promise of the Kingdom; between Eucharist and mission.

The community that eats the bread is called to struggle for a world in which all shall eat. I shall never forget a Eucharist conducted in 1989 (as the struggle against Apartheid was reaching a climax) in Cambridge by Malusi Mpumulwana from South Africa, a friend of Steve Biko’s, Black Consciousness leader and bishop. He told us of an experience he had had conducting the Eucharist in one of the so-called “Independent Homelands” during the Apartheid era. He was a few miles from Cape Town, a city in which the white population enjoyed fantastic wealth. However, in the homelands, starvation was rife. A mother brought her baby to the altar and made to take a communion wafer for the baby. “No my daughter!” said

Malusi. “You know our tradition. I will bless your baby for you.” “Father,” said the woman, “this piece of bread will be the only food my child eats this weekend. Yet you refuse it, and then you tell us that Jesus is the Bread of Life! For shame!” It was a conversion experience for Malusi. How could a community celebrate the Eucharist – a symbol of life and plenty – if it bore no relation to the starvation around it? To be part of the messianic, Eucharistic community called the Church is to be called to struggle for a world in which all shall eat and live, because Jesus is the Bread of Life.

## **Going deeper into the text (Mark 6: 30-44)**

From our earliest days we learn at home, school, in the market place about economics, about working and earning and saving; about the cost of living; about responsibility and caring for family; about community and sharing. We learn to define “success” and “failure”. We learn to define security and we learn about relationship to things, to other people, to the world. Educational systems, the media, marketing techniques, religious traditions, family practices and community rituals all contribute to shape our values.

Other cultures have developed economic practices radically different from ours. The potlatch tradition, for example, was a widespread practice among the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Coast at times of significant change: puberty, marriage, accession to chieftdom, death. Potlatch is based on the idea that all wealth, material and symbolic, must circulate. It honours non-acquisitiveness, generosity, and redistribution of wealth. When ritual privileges are publicly transmitted to the next generation, prestigious objects are given away in a ceremony involving feast, speeches, singing and dancing.

The ritual practice of the ‘give-away’ could happen only in a culture where great value is placed not on possessions, but on the willingness of the individual to dispossessions, but on the willingness of the individual to dispossess her/himself for the greater good of the whole.

In Mark's account of the first wilderness feeding, Jesus challenged the disciples to move beyond the predominant economic approach in order to enact an economics of sharing. This narrative issues the same challenge to disciples today. Many groups and organisations are accepting that challenge by testing new economic models that emphasises cooperation and participation rather than competition and individualism. Worker-owned businesses, cooperatives, land trust, community supported agriculture-community loan funds, socially responsible banking, community currencies and the like offer possibilities of a significantly changed economic landscape.

Many of the values embodied by these alternative economic models are in sharp contrast to the values of the dominant economic system in the world. Yet, these ideas share the principles of compassion of Jesus's wilderness feedings: The survival and well-being of people and their communities take precedence over profit for a few. One person or community or nation does not walk on the backs of others to get ahead: the "development" of the human family cannot take place at the expense of the rest of creation; who we are is not measured by how we earn a living, or what possessions we have. We who are followers of Jesus must try to make these values real in our world so that there will be "enough for everyone"

See Rob Greenfield's link on sustainable living in a small apartment:

<https://www.facebook.com/RobGreenfield/videos/1404904376303303/>

***For reflection:***

1. How can your church look after the survival and well-being of people in your community take precedence over the survival of your church building?
2. How can you as followers of Jesus show compassion to your community and be a blessing to your community?
3. What action can you take, so that there is enough for everyone?

## All age worship ideas (Mark 6: 30-44)

One of the keys to good all age worship is to keep it simple and relatively short. Ideally aim for a service of 45-50 minutes. That's not to say a service can't be longer but if you are thinking of 1hr30+ think carefully about your use of space and above all else be creative, take risks and have fun – partying is integral to the kingdom but we'll leave that for a year on Luke...

### **Themes:**

This story follows straight on to the account of Jesus sending the disciples out (v.6-13) They tell him all they have been doing then it seems they are tired from their adventures and so Jesus takes them somewhere to get rest. The crowd however have other ideas and set off in pursuit. They are excited by what they have seen and heard and they want more so they follow.

Jesus has compassion on them – he is so filled with love that he simply has to respond. The disciples on the other hand are in more of the mindset that they've 'clocked off' for the night. This is their time with Jesus that they don't want to be interrupted by several thousand hungry bellies.

They look to Jesus to take responsibility and send the crowd away but he puts it straight back on to them 'You give them something to eat!' The disciples have to quickly learn that 'clocking off' is not in a kingdom value.

Sure enough they find some food – certainly not enough – but they bring it to Jesus and he gives thanks, breaks it and instructs the disciples to distribute it. Everyone is full by the end!

Three years ago I visited Uganda and shared with people whose story has been transformed by their encounter with Jesus through this and other passages from the Bible. Rather than ask 'Who will feed us?' the poorest communities have brought all that they have together and invited God to bless the offering. As their hearts are transformed so is the value of the offering and they are learning that together they have far much more than if they were apart. Whole communities are being transformed as people learn ways to find a way through and beyond the injustice of poverty. Alongside this people of no faith and other faiths are encountering Jesus as well and so new churches are being built as new communities are formed – the transformation is holistic – just like the gospel.

### **Ideas:**

#### Treasure Hunt

Hide 5 bread rolls (in plastic bags or cling film) and two tins of tuna and invite any children to hunt for them as a lead into the story.

If you have a bread machine you could get help from young people to make and bake a loaf or get a Jusrol tube from the supermarket that children can break up into rolls, croissants or whatever it says on the tin!)

Make or buy a piñata (a Spanish toy filled with sweets)

You can get them quite cheaply from supermarkets or B&M) and hide it. Have a taped up roll of newspaper ready or a good solid roll of cardboard.

When the piñata is found get the children to take turns at trying to hit it and when it breaks open invite them to share the sweets with the congregation.

When we invite Jesus into the ordinary extraordinary things happen! The Kingdom of God breaks out! Lives are transformed, communities are made and we begin to get a vision of an age where everyone gets a share. This may seem like a dream but when we trust Jesus it becomes reality.

***Holy Communion:***

Lay a large white sheet out on the floor and place bread and wine in the centre. Invite any children and young people to join you on the cloth around the bread and wine.

Tell the story of the Feeding of the 5000 taking the bread and breaking it as Jesus did. Then remind everyone that Jesus describes himself as the bread of life and when we eat the bread we take on the life of Jesus for ourselves.

Then remind people that Jesus broke bread on another occasion at the Passover with his friends. He said then that the bread was his body. When we eat the bread we become the body of Christ sharing his life with everyone God sends us out to serve.

Jesus also shared wine with his friends reminding us of the promise that we are forgiven and made new by his sacrifice on the cross. The least, the last and the lost have a new hope in him.

After you have prayed for the Spirit to bless the gathering who will receive the bread and wine invite the children and young people to distribute the bread and then the wine

***Prayers:***

If possible get people to gather in groups like they did in Mark's account of this story. Invite them to pray for God to transform our ordinary lives into something extraordinary for him. May the Spirit open our eyes and hearts to see where we can be a blessing and share the compassion of Jesus for the hungry, the hopeless and helpless.

Perhaps then get the groups to pray for one another either silently or out loud! An easier way of doing this is to stand in a circle facing each others backs and to place hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you then quietly pray for that person. After a minute or so invite them to turn around and lay hands on the shoulders of the person on the other side – everyone should get prayed for twice.



## Liturgies and hymns Mark 2: 1-12

This is where you can find hymn suggestions and liturgies for use with this week's text. The text for this Sunday is Mark 6: 30-44 and this may lead you to explore the issue of people being hungry and the providing for the needs of those without.

### ***A prayer for the homeless***

God of Justice,  
Have mercy on those who sleep on the streets or in hostels,  
On the floor or on a sofa,  
In store rooms or offices,  
And those who know that their friends' hospitality  
Is at breaking point.  
Help us to build a fairer society,  
Where having no home does not exclude anyone  
From work and health and respect.  
Help us to build a society where all may 'dwell in safety'.  
In the name of the homeless Saviour, Jesus.  
Amen.  
(A Prayer of the month from The Well at Willen Community)

### ***A Commission and Sending Forth prayer***

Cease to do evil, learn to do good  
Search for justice, help the homeless,  
The poor, the hungry, the elderly,  
The lonely, the imprisoned.  
May the love of God enfold us?  
And the fire of the Spirit inspire us,  
And may the blessing of the Loving God  
Come down upon us and remain with us always.  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

### ***A prayer that would work well as a thanksgiving prayer at Communion.***

Bountiful God,  
When we eat this bread,  
And drink this cup,  
Remind us that it is at your table  
That we do it;  
A table weighed down with good things,  
A table full to overflowing.

Remind us that we have neither earned,  
Nor deserve, that you freely give.  
For it is to the starving that you bring satisfaction  
Whereas the full you send away empty.

Help us to respond to your invitation  
By sharing what we have received,  
By breaking the body and blood of creation with love and reverence,  
And by adjusting our own wants so that no one is turned away.  
(Ged Johnson/CAFOD)

***An opening prayer, with responses***

Compassionate God,  
As your outstretched hands held a crucified world,  
**So let our hands convey the touch of love.**  
As you embraced our vulnerability  
**So cradle our hopes and fears.**  
Reach out to our frailty, release our pain  
**And in your tenderness, bring health to our brokenness**  
That, in our weakness, we may find strength  
**And, in our poverty, the unfurled riches of your resurrection.**  
Annabel Shilson-Thomas CAFOD

***A congregational prayer of commitment***

Open my eyes O Lord,  
Open my eyes that I may see the need of others,  
Open my ears that I may hear their cries,  
Open my heart so they need not be without succour;  
Let me not be afraid to defend the weak  
Because of the anger of the strong,  
Nor afraid to defend the poor  
Because of the anger of the rich.  
Use me to bring love and hope and faith where it is needed  
And so open my eyes and my ears  
That I may this coming day  
Be able to do some work of peace for you. Amen  
(Alan Paton)

***A prayer for those losing hope***

O God,  
Who created us out of love,  
We pray for all who are losing hope.  
Help us to understand what it is like  
To be poor or marginalised,  
Or exhausted by the sheer struggle to survive.  
Fire our imaginations,  
And enliven us to work for the relief  
Of their suffering;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
(Angela Ashwin, *The Book of a Thousand Prayers*, 2002)

***A Thanksgiving Prayer for Communion***

God is here.

**We praise God together.**

Let us say thank you to God  
**who has done so much for us.**

God, you made us, and the world and everything in it.  
All the good we see comes from you.  
You have always loved us  
but people have not always loved you.  
You sent Jesus to show us how to live  
and to bring us back to you again.

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

He died for us on the cross  
so that through your Spirit  
we can all be your people.  
And so with thanks we praise you.

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

We are here because on the night before he died  
Jesus shared a meal with his friends.  
There he took some bread  
and gave thanks to you, God.  
He broke it into pieces, and gave it to them.  
“This is my body,” he said.  
“Do this, and know that I am with you.”

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

Later, he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to you.  
He shared it with them, and said  
“This is my blood, which brings new life.  
Do this, and know that I am with you.”

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

And so, remembering Jesus, who died,  
was raised to new life by you,  
and is alive forever,  
we are glad to share that life and live in him.

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

Send your Holy Spirit  
so that this bread and wine

can be for us the body and blood of Jesus,  
and through this food  
give us strength to live as your people.

**Amen. We are alive in Jesus.**

Help us care for your world and for each other  
in the way that Jesus showed us.  
Until he comes again,  
with all your people  
in every time and every land  
we worship you and say:

**We praise you.**

**We thank you.**

**We bless you.**

**Amen.**

(Rev. Bosco Peters [www.liturgy.co.nz](http://www.liturgy.co.nz))

***Prayer on hunger***

The Earth is the Lord's (leader)

***And everything in it (all)***

Faithful God you have blessed us in so many ways (leader)

***We will not forget your goodness to us God (all)***

Your love and grace are our daily companions (leader)

***We rejoice in our journey with you (all)***

Lord Jesus, You were moved with compassion in the face of suffering (leader)

***Soften our hearts, make us a compassionate people (all)***

Lord Jesus, on a crowded mountainside, you fed the hungry (leader)

***From what you have given us, help us ensure that everyone has enough food (all)***

Lord Jesus, you stooped to bring hope to the leper (leader)

***Make us never too busy to bring hope to the hopeless (all)***

Lord Jesus, you displayed your love for us in your life and your death (leader)

***Save us from cynicism and help us live sacrificially (all)***

Lord Jesus by your actions you brought transformation to the world. (Leader)

***By your power help us to be agents of change in the places of need (all)***

In your name Amen

(Fred Drummond, EA director for Scotland who also heads up the Prayer Ministries of the Alliance)

***A series of short prayers***

Lord God, we pray for everyone who is hungry today – whether they live thousands of miles away or in our local communities.

We pray urgently for food prices around the world to stabilise and fall, so that more countries do not fall into extreme hunger.

God we ask for wisdom for leaders and experts working to tackle hunger, and that they would be willing and able to make progress in identifying ways to combat food

security and help communities adapt to changing weather patterns.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

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Lord, you made us to know what hunger is, but also to know the goodness of your provision. We pray for those who share this earth with us, but for whom hunger is a crippling, life-threatening danger. We pray for those who have nothing and those who have too little to eat: would you help them and allow us to be part of the solution?

Amen

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Lord, the scale of global poverty is beyond our understanding. Give bread to those who are hungry and a hunger for justice for those of who have bread. Grant us the faith and persistence to sow seeds of righteousness that might take years or even generations to bear fruit.

Amen.

(Fred Drummond, EA director for Scotland who also heads up the Prayer ministries of the Alliance)

## **A Communion service on the theme of world hunger**

### **(Mark 6: 30-44)**

**Communion service: theme of "Enough food IF ..."**

(Lawrence Moore)

**Gathering Song: Uyai Mose/Come all you people**

Uyai mose – tinamate Mwari (x3)

Uyai mose zvino

Come All You People, Come praise your maker (x3)

*Come now and worship the Lord*

**Opening words**

God, who made all that is by the power of your Word,

***We come to be re-created in Christ's image***

Jesus, who stands with open arms and nail-scarred hands,

***We come to be held in your love***

Holy Spirit, breath of God and power of resurrection

***We come to find life in all its fullness***

We come to be inspired, challenged, strengthened and disturbed

***We rejoice that you are here, the Living God, moving among us***

**Opening hymn: 'Father, we love you' (R&S 30)**

**Prayers of adoration, confession & forgiveness**

**Adoration:**

Blessed are you, Lord God,

**Earth-maker, star-lighter, world-lover.**

You sang creation into being by the power of your Word;

Yet not a sparrow falls to the ground without you knowing it,

And the very hairs on our heads are numbered!

**Praise you for the mind-blowing scale of your greatness**

**And the searing intimacy of your love.**

Blessed are you, Jesus Christ,

**Truth-teller, bread-giver, Kingdom-bringer.**

You are Emmanuel – 'God with us';

You whispered words of love and welcome, and we howled for your crucifixion,

Yet instead of judgement, we hear your plea for us: 'Father, forgive them!'

**Praise you for the shocking generosity of your grace**

**And the New Creation you bring to birth.**

Blessed are you, Holy Spirit,

**Dead-raiser, joy-bringer, heart-dweller.**

You are the voice of justice that inspired the prophets and the Power that raised

Jesus from the dead,

Yet you make us your dwelling place, intimately, filling us with the very Life of God.

**Praise you for the abundant Life that you bring**

**And your presence with us, moment by moment.**

**Glory to you, God our Father!**

**Glory to you, God our Brother!**

**Glory to you, God our Life!**

**Amen!**

**Confession:**

**Pronouncement of forgiveness**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Offertory**

**Invitation to the table**

**Hymn 447: 'I come with joy to meet my Lord'**

**Listening to the Word**

Reading: Mark 6: 30-44

Sermon: 'Enough food for everyone ... IF'

**Hymn 635: 'Put peace into each other's hands'**

**Words of institution**

**The Gloria (*R&S* 7 in 3-part round)**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Sanctus:**           **'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord**  
                                  **Holy is the Lord God almighty (x2)**  
                                  **Who was and is and is to come**  
                                  **Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!'**

**Communion**

**The Peace**

## Hymn 641: 'We pray for peace'

### Intercessions

#### Intercessions

Dear God

**Help us to treat others, as we would like to be treated.**

For those who are in trouble,  
in prison,  
or trapped by their own weakness and hurts.

*(Silence.)*

We pray for understanding and forgiveness.

As we are forgiven,

**Help us to forgive others.**

For those who are poor, and suffer injustice,  
who are hungry and homeless and filled with despair.

*(Silence.)*

We pray for justice and a fair distribution of the world's resources.

As we are advantaged,

**Help us to give to others.**

For those who mourn, and have lost people they love,  
who are sad and feel lonely and unsure of tomorrow.

*(Silence.)*

We pray for them to be comforted, and given new hope.

As we are loved,

**Help us to love others.**

For the family of the Church, in its joy and its pain,  
for its struggle to be the body of Christ, and a sign of the Kingdom that comes.



*(Silence.)*

We pray for direction, and love, for confidence and care.

As we are accepted,

**Help us to accept others.**

**Amen.**

**Closing hymn: 'This is the truth we hold' (R&S 607)**

**The Grace**