

## Week 55 – Saturday 14th July



### Afternoon Tea

Summer is with us, and alongside the smell of evening barbecues is that wonderful institution of the Strawberry Tea or Afternoon Tea in the manse or church garden, with all the joy of uneven chairs, wobbly tables, and trying to keep the flies off the food. Why do we do it?!

But I have to say I like afternoon teas and church garden parties: for someone who uses mugs and usually eats a sandwich on the go, to sit down to a civilised tea, with crockery that makes me feel elegant and sumptuous food, cut into small manageable sized pieces, takes me to an era that I never knew but nostalgically long for. There is something comforting about scones, jam and cream; about a cake stand that is filled with delectable and calorific treats; about sharing with others; and for the bakers the knowledge that their food is being well appreciated.

In my thoughts I am taken to the narrative of Zacchaeus in the Bible (Luke 19:1–10), when Jesus calls up to him and says he is coming to his home for tea. I wonder what they had to eat? In a Messy Church, we looked at this story and the children chose what they would give Jesus if he came for tea at their home. I only hope he likes Pringles, pickled onions, chocolate fingers and a McDonald's Happy Meal!

The account of Zacchaeus has actually worried me in the past because as someone who lives alone I don't tend to have spare food that can be made easily into a quick tea for unexpected visitors. I do have bread but it is in the freezer and goes from there straight into the toaster – I don't have a loaf left out ready to make sandwiches with. If I know someone is coming, well I prepare, I get ready, I bake or buy. But the unexpected guest can be a worry. Whereas I might munch a piece of cheese and apple or fill up on a cup of soup, that's not ideal for a visitor and in no way matches the elegance of a 'proper' afternoon tea!

But hospitality is at the heart of our faith. We show the love of God in our lives through our care of others. We mirror the generosity of God by sharing what we have, and it is often over a meal that communities come together. In Acts 2 it says: <sup>42</sup> *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship...*

<sup>46</sup> *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,* <sup>47</sup> *praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

If Jesus came for tea, what would you give him? Yet did he not also say: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me* (Matthew 25:40), so whenever we provide food for others, especially those who cannot reciprocate, then we entertain Jesus. Now that is food for thought!

**Loving Lord, you broke bread and shared it many times,  
including the feeding of the 5000, at the Last Supper, and on the road to Emmaus.  
You gave of yourself on the cross in order that we all might come close  
to the father heart of God through your sacrifice and in that act you,  
Lord Jesus, invite us to be in community with you.  
Help us to mirror your generosity and actions,  
help us to reach out to others as you did,  
and by the power of the Spirit,  
may others come to your banqueting table and share the feast you have prepared for us.  
And when unexpected guests arrive help us to feed them and make them welcome!  
Amen.**