

## 'God's help'

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*Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ*

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. – Jn.6,35*

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### Collect:

God of life and love, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### Say it loud

- 1 Far and near, hear the call,  
worship Him, Lord of all;  
families of nations, come,  
celebrate what God has done.
- 2 Deep and wide is the love,  
heaven sent from above;  
God's own Son for sinners died,  
rose again, He is alive.  
*Say it loud, say it strong,  
tell the world what God has done;  
say it loud, praise His name,  
let the earth rejoice for the Lord reigns.*
- 3 At His name let praise begin,  
oceans roar, nature sing,  
for He comes to judge the earth  
in righteousness and in His truth.  
*Say it loud, say it strong,  
tell the world what God has done;  
say it loud, praise His name,  
let the earth rejoice for the Lord reigns,  
the Lord reigns.*

Words and music by Graham Kendrick

## Jn.21,1-14

Dear friends

The third appearance of Jesus to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead involves events which indicate symbolically what the Christian faith is that the disciples will proclaim and which those who receive their testimony will enjoy. The power manifest in their catch of fish will accompany their testimony and will in their word be present to a faith which hears and obeys. And their breakfast with their risen Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee points to the fellowship which faith makes the believer part of. Both these aspects of faith – power and fellowship – are the work of the risen Lord Jesus Christ in and among those who believe. They are the fruit of a relationship with Jesus Christ who rose from the dead and is alive for ever more.

The first sign is the amazing catch of fish. All night the disciples had tried to make a catch, but hadn't succeeded. With the rise of the sun the chance of success had diminished even further. Just then a person on shore, whom they didn't recognise from where they were, called over to them and said: *"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."* John recognised by this that the man on shore was the Lord Jesus, because it was a repeat of what Jesus had done when he called them at the beginning of his ministry. On learning this, Peter immediately jumped in the lake and swam towards Jesus while the rest of them followed in the boat. The catch of fish turned out to be massive – 153 large fish.

It is obvious that what they experienced was the powerful help of the risen Lord. But to what end was that help? Well, two things: Firstly, the large catch would go some way in terms of providing for the disciples' families/dependents and so enable them to dedicate themselves to being apostles and proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection. And secondly, it signalled to them *what they had* and would be able by their witness of Jesus to offer and give: Through their witness would come the powerful help of the Lord, the help of God, by faith.

That Peter understood this perfectly well, he proved when after the Spirit had been given at Pentecost he went up to the temple with John and on the way met a lame beggar. For he said to the man: *"Silver or gold I do not have, but **what I do have** I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."* As he spoke, so it was heard, and so the lame beggar stood up and walked. Accounting for this amazing feat Peter then said: *"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see."* (Acts 3,6-16) But Peter pointed to the name of Jesus as the cause of the man's healing, and to faith, because he wanted all to know that in the message of Jesus that he had *was the living reality of God's help working through faith!*

There is a name, dear friends, which holds the power to help and save all who call upon it, because, as John pointed out to Peter, *'It is the Lord!'* John recognised him from experience, we know him through the gospel. For it is in the gospel of Jesus that this name is held out to us, for that is where it is revealed – the incarnate Word of God through whom and for whom all was made that is made, the Son of God, who taught the way and truth of God and knowledge of Him in grace and mercy and love, who died on the cross for all our sins and rose from the dead to give new life, and who gives the Spirit so that we may live by the Spirit in the truth.

In this name – as his life, death and resurrection show – is the power of God to turn our life around. And that is: to deliver it from the unprofitable and fruitless state in which it is kept by sin and death. That's what is illustrated by the disciples' fruitless attempt at fishing. But it is described by Paul in

these words: *“If I speak in tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing”* [it profits nothing, it is ultimately fruitless] (1Cor.13,1-3) The power of the name of Jesus is that which delivers life from this state of fruitlessness and renews it to the light of love and truth.

Life and death, heaven and hell – from here alone, the fruit of love, do we recognise truly and fully what they are. Of these two states, the fruitless and the fruitful, one needs to go and become dead and the other rise and become alive. Are we not utterly helpless here? When I see that I am, I see in truth that this is what God has promised to help us with, I see His glory: to be the helper of the helpless! And his power is in the name of his Son who was crucified for the sins of the world and was raised from the dead by the Spirit of God and who gives the Spirit to those who ask. [Therefore, let us ask, even as we repent and turn to God, so that our sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. -Acts 3,19).

Dear friends, love is fellowship and flows from it. The breakfast that the risen Lord had with his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee that morning was the sign of love in the fellowship of Jesus with his disciples and of the disciples with Jesus. Not they invited or gave, but Jesus invited and Jesus gave: And the disciples knew by receiving this meal of fellowship that it was a thing of utter grace and that this fellowship would be offered to all who believe (for only faith goes with grace!) – that faith in Jesus would bring the believer into fellowship through Christ with God and in him with one another.

This is why they went out to proclaim Jesus Christ and the resurrection: *“so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”* (1Jn.1,3) Is this message not for us? Yes, it is for us also, for it is in the name of him who says: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”* (Rev.3,20). AMEN

### **I'm not ashamed to own my Lord**

1 I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
or to defend His cause;  
uphold the honour of His word,  
the glory of His cross.  
Jesus my God, I know Your name,  
Your name is all I trust;  
You will not put my soul to shame,  
nor let my hope be lost.

2 Firm as His throne His promise stands,  
and He can well secure  
all I've committed to His hands  
till that decisive hour.  
Then, Lord, You'll own my worthless name  
before the Father's face,

and in the new Jerusalem  
appoint my soul a place.

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
or to defend His cause;  
uphold the honour of His word,  
the glory of His cross.

Words by Isaac Watts  
Words adapted by Jonathan LeTocq  
Music by Jonathan LeTocq

Lord God, like your Son said, his disciples when their time came did greater things than he had done during his time with them, because since his cross and resurrection through their word you bless everyone who believes with every spiritual blessing in Christ. It is your gracious will to make over everything that is in Christ to those who receive him in faith. And is not every one of your promises in him fulfilled? And is not in him the grace of sins forgiven, victory over death, the power of the resurrection? And greater still, is not in him our fellowship with you and with one another? And so it pleased you to be the helper of the helpless and manifest your glory and power through Christ's obedience and cross. Help us in your mercy to know that when our helplessness seems to us to have grown too big to handle, the power of your grace in Christ is greater still, and that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ. To you be all glory and praise.

- time of prayer / intercession – [we pray for those who have become ill, are fighting illness or are recovering from it, for those who care for the needs of others; for those in positions of leadership and authority: that they may rule wisely and seek peace, that they may guard the values by which a society can flourish, that they may lead with courage and wisdom, for a turning to the light that is God's Word; for those who have lost loved ones, need comfort into their grieving and the loving presence of friends; we give thanks for all the help we have received and still experience, for grace and answered prayers; we pray for the despondent and the hopeless, for those who seek light, for the wisdom to comfort the suffering; we pray for our sister church in Northern India and for the body of Christ worldwide and here; we pray for God's blessing on the preaching and teaching of His word, for people to respond in repentance and faith, for freedom and liberty and courage to stand for what is good and true and honours His name; ]

***'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORIOUS POWER OF THE FATHER. SET OUT, THEN, ON A NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST.

AND THE BLESSING OF GOD ALMIGHTY, THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT BE AMONG YOU AND REMAIN WITH YOU.

AMEN