

WEDNESDAY 3 EASTER – ST HELEN’S, ABINGDON

22 APRIL 2026



Acts 8.1b–8 / John 6.35–40

I will raise them up on the last day.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – *Amen*

SAINST JOHN TELLS US ABOUT JESUS in a *distinctive* sort of way. Where Matthew, Mark, and Luke usually offer us vignettes of teaching, sometimes connected up in a series, at other times just jumbled together in a one-blooming-passage-after-another sequence without any particular order. St John loves to take a story and extend it by adding dialogue, spelling out its significance, making explicit what other evangelists allowed to remain in the background. So while all the gospels tell us that Jesus fed a multitude, St John takes that incident and draws it out into a lengthy bread-of-life *discourse*. When in the summer of years in which we read Mark’s Gospel on Sundays, John pops up — because Mark, being shorter, needs help to supply an entire liturgical year’s worth of readings — you may have noticed that we spend week after week reading about Jesus being the bread that came down from heaven. But that’s not the only case in point; John takes a story about a Samaritan woman by the well, and extends it over the course a whole chapter. Healing a man born blind? Not just a couple of verses, but another whole chapter. Luke tells us the story of Jesus raising the widow’s son at Nain in 6 verses; John takes all of chapter 11 to narrate the raising of Lazarus.

John uses these longer descriptions in several ways. In one, he makes *encounters* with Jesus into *conversations* with Jesus. We don’t see that this morning, because we only hear a few verses, but just before these verses the

crowd has asked when he came to Capernaum, what they must do to do the works of God, what sign justified his claims about himself, how he could compare himself to Moses, and asked him, ‘Sir, give us this bread from heaven always.’

John uses his longer stories for repetition, for emphasis. Throughout chapter six, Jesus uses the expressions ‘bread of life’ and ‘bread of heaven’ over and over again (10x), when these phrases *never* come up in the other gospels. *Repetitio mater memoriæ*; repetition is the mother of memory, and once having heard these verses we will not forget that ‘the bread that he will give for the life of the world is his flesh.’

And last, John uses the longer treatments to spell out some of the meanings of Jesus’s words and actions. In a few minutes, we will hear his words from the Last Supper, taken from Matthew and Luke: ‘Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ St John reminds us to connect the Body that we receive with the manna with which God fed the tribes of Jacob in the wilderness, to understand that our communion is not just a bite of a wafer or a morsel from a loaf, but is the means of our sharing Jesus’s own life, life that draws us *out of* the time-bound world of strife and struggle, thriving and perishing, hunger and thirst, and *into* the eternal life of peace in unity with God. *Whoever* comes to Jesus will be fed; *anyone* who comes to him he will never drive away; *all* who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and he *will* raise us up on the last day.

✠ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit —

Amen

ALMIGHTY God,
who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth,
to the intent that they may return into the way of
righteousness:

Grant unto all them that are admitted
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,
that they may eschew those things
that are contrary to their profession,
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*