

Sunday 1st August 2021 John 6:24-35

Jesus says I am the bread of life.

Now, I don't know about you, but I do like a nice bit of bread.

What's your favourite type of bread?

I like a bit of toasted white bread with butter and marmalade for breakfast.

Ooh or a nice brown granary bread sandwich, filled with soft cheese and smoked salmon....ooh yes.

And, I'm a bit partial to bread and butter pudding, or a nice hunk of crunchy French stick with cheese and pickle. Bread is one of those basic foods that is not only tasty, but it fills you up nicely too.

Bread is an important part of most people's diet. Here in our bible story it represents food that we need to survive. We pray in the Lord's prayer, give us today our daily bread. Praying that God will give us what we need to survive each day. We all need to eat, without food we wouldn't last long. Apparently you can only survive for about 60 days without food.

Here in our reading Jesus likens himself to bread. He says 'I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry'. I wonder what he means by this?

Well let's have a look at our reading today.

You see, just before our reading, Jesus had given dinner to 5000 men and their families, do you remember that story? A great crowd had gathered, following Jesus to hear him teach. But at the end of the day they were hungry and there was no food for them to eat. Except, yes, that's right except for a young boy who had just 5 small loaves and 2 fish and by a miracle Jesus made them feed all those people.

After that amazing miracle, Jesus went to the other-side of the lake. But rather than catching the boat to the other side, he walked because the disciples had taken the boat. He didn't walk round the lake, that would have taken too long, so Jesus walked across it. Yes, Jesus walked on the water to the other side of the lake...Wow, amazing.

Once the crowd realised Jesus had gone they all decided to follow him. They got into their boats and went off, in search of him. They wanted more....

Did they want to hear more about this remarkable man and what he was saying....?

Did they want to see more miracles?

I wonder, what do you think?

Well, no! what the crowd wanted was more food.

The crowd were more interested in being fed a second tasty dinner like the night before, than they were in exploring how he made it across the lake without a boat.

And so, here in our reading, Jesus tries to explain, to help them understand that there was much more to him than just being an amazing and generous chef.

He says...Do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you.

What does he mean by that?

Sometimes if we don't understand something in the bible, it can help to read the same bit in another translation. So, here's the passion translation, which puts it like this...

Why would you strive for food that is perishable and not be passionate to seek the food of eternal life, which never spoils? I, the Son of Man, am ready to give you what matters most.

You see, the bread that you eat may satisfy your hunger for food, but has it ever satisfied your hunger for love, or has it ever satisfied your hunger for truth, or hope or peace, or a meaningful life?

No, of course not, bread can't do that. Only Jesus can do that.

When Jesus explained this to the people they wanted to know more and asked, *'what must we do to do the work God requires?'* What do we need to **do** to get this food that lasts forever? What do we need to **do** to get this special food of hope, love and purpose? Please give it to us, it sounds amazing!

But do you know that it's not about **doing** things? Jesus is the one who performs all the good works, we've seen that already in the miracles he has performed. So, actually the only thing that must be part of our daily diet, is simply faith. Faith in Jesus. Faith that Jesus has earned our salvation, he has done everything needed to save us, to bring us to God, to bring us hope, love and purpose, forever; so we don't have to do stuff in order to have those wonderful things, just believe in Jesus. Believe that Jesus is the son of God. So, along with eating bread for our bodies, we need to have faith in Jesus for our lives.

But the crowd just didn't get it. They didn't understand who Jesus is.

Rather than thinking about all the miracles Jesus had done the previous day, the making 5 loaves and 2 fish feed more than 5000 people. Rather than spending a moment thinking – how did Jesus get here so quickly without a boat? they just wanted another miracle.

Jesus could have easily done one for them – The Gospels are full of Jesus doing amazing miracles - but sometimes we can see Jesus do amazing things, and not stop to think about what the miracles are about. And we want to see more miracles, just one more thing before we will really believe in him.

When Jesus fed the 5000 people – I wonder what was he trying to teach us?

When Jesus walked on water – what was he trying to say to us?

When we pray to Jesus and he brings a sense of calm, what is that all about?

But the crowd continued to press him. You may have fed 5000, but Moses brought down bread from heaven that fed millions. What other miracles will you do? Come on Jesus!

It was true, that when the Israelites were walking through the desert for 40 years, God provided a substance called manna, that they gathered up, ground up and made into bread for each day. But even this miracle wasn't enough for them. They may have gathered the manna in the morning but by the afternoon they were building a golden calf to other gods because they just didn't believe.

Once again, Jesus tries to explain to them.

It's not Moses, but my father, it's God, who gives the true bread. The true bread that gives life to the world, The true bread that comes down from heaven and brings love and joy, purpose and life.

That got the crowd excited. And they say – we want this bread – always give us this bread.

And Jesus says, the first of the great I AM sayings, *'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry. Whoever believes in me will never go thirsty.'*

Jesus is saying. I am essential for life. Physical bread doesn't last but I bring life that will last forever.

And he offers us all an invitation.

He says, whoever comes to me – Jesus says, just come and see.

He says, whoever believes in me – come, see and believe.

For those who come to Jesus and believe in him, he says, will never go hungry and never be thirsty.

We don't have to work for it, we just need to believe. And believing in Jesus, brings the greatest miracle of all. By the amazing grace of Jesus, who gave his life for us and rose again to show that he is indeed God's son, who forgives us and brings us eternal life. By this greatest miracle of all, Jesus comes to live in us, he becomes our closest friend, who will never leave us and will always satisfy us.

So, when you next have some bread to eat, remember Jesus. Remember Jesus is essential for your life and enjoy the love, hope and purpose he brings, forever. Amen.