

John 6 vv 24-35: Sermon at Good Shepherd for 01.08.18 by Rev Carol Harley

May my words be true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen..

In the last verse, verse 35, of our reading from the Evangelist John this morning, we have Jesus saying to the crowd, 'I am the bread of life'. What an extraordinary thing to say! Let's look a little deeper to see what Jesus means by these words.

Following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus moves out of the immediate area, prompting some of the crowd to search for him. They find on the other side of the lake and are clearly keen to see more of this man who provided a miraculous picnic for five thousand people with the contents of one young boy's packed lunch of five bread rolls and two dried fish.

All four Gospel-writers record that story, so it obviously was deeply significant for the earliest Christians, with their Jewish background. It reminded them of one of their most important stories, the feeding of their ancestors by Moses with the manna in the wilderness. Jesus points out to them that Moses didn't actually do anything – God did. All good things come from God.

The people were probably expecting to witness another miracle. As if the previous day's miracle wasn't enough and they probably weren't prepared for the way Jesus speaks to them. Suggesting that they had probably only looked for him because he gave them food and he opens with them a discussion about bread, comparing this everyday necessity to himself as the source of all life and that their work is to believe in him who provides all things.

Jesus says to the people that he was offering something even better – his own humble, holy, God-filled life. 'I am the bread of life', said Jesus. This living, life-giving bread would permanently satisfy human hunger and thirst for God's blessing and God's forgiveness. He himself was a God-send, and those who feed on him, who believe in him, would not perish, but would be raised to life on the last day to which the people asked him, 'Sir, give us this bread always'.

This is the power of our simple meal each week of a wafer of bread and a few drops of wine in remembrance of Jesus who released us from our slavery and back to God.

Like the disciples we see in him the one who nourishes our souls, and we too say: '*Sir, give us this bread, now and always*'.

It's a simple act, but it speaks directly to the centre of our hearts and soul with a power that binds us to the living Lord.

The metaphor of the Bread of Life surely suggests that our spiritual life is directly fed and nourished by our Risen Lord himself in a way that is more like eating and drinking than like reasoning. We live by receiving Christ into ourselves in humble dependence.

All this is powerfully expressed in the Eucharist, in the simple act of taking a wafer of bread and eating it. Eating is something anybody can do. It is simply received. In Jesus Christ, God offers himself for our feeding. Don't worry about it, or refuse to take it until you fully understand it. Just take, and eat. In Holy Communion, this *Bread of Life* becomes '*The Bread of Life*'. That simple action of taking and eating together with the worship, prayer, Bible reading and reflection in which day by day we feed by faith on Him who said, 'I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me shall never be hungry'. But by receiving Jesus, the Bread of Life, into our hearts and souls and lives, may that lead us to something more?

Let's review our commitment to the Lord.

It has been suggested that when Jesus took the bread, broke it and offered it to his disciples, in that dramatic moment he was offering them a share in His Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Christ who would be broken on the Cross for them. Shall we only be taking a wafer of bread or will we be accepting a share in the kingdom of the broken Christ, and by sharing in the life of the Kingdom inevitably involves commitment, not only to Christ but to his people in the church; to our brothers and sisters who are also his *people*.

The sharing of the Bread of Life translates itself into a determination to do all that's possible to ensure justice on earth; bread for the hungry; drink for the thirsty; clothing for the naked.

Christians today ought to consider contributing to the solution of the enormous problem of hunger. Then the Church will again be a sign in the world for those who hunger for bread and for faith.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.