

## **John 6. 35, 41-51 - I am the bread of Life**

8th Aug 2021

*Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

*At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"*

*"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

Lets talk about bread!

Grain was used by Neolithic farming communities way back, and the first bread we know of was found in Jordan, and is approximately 12 - 15,000 years old. A bit stale now!

That's how long bread has kept us going - that's what it means to be a staple - something we are reliant on - its essential.

As essential as money? Well funnily enough, people call money - bread! Or if they're being clever, they call it "dough". And that comes from cockney rhyming slang - bread and honey = money!

And actually, in order to find security and peace in life - the base stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs - is to have our essentials - food, water, warmth, rest.

Some children rescued from a concentration camp at the end of the second world war we struggling to accept that life would be ok - all they'd known was terrible hardship and hunger. And what their carers found was that if they gave them a loaf of bread, to sleep with at night - they were ok. They knew the essential would be there..

This is what we mean when we pray - give us today our daily bread - What we need for today lord - friends, shelter, food, purpose.. the things that give us life.

So maybe Jesus should have started with that introduction in John chapter 6. He's fed the 5000, and then the disciples got into a boat to go to the other side, and

then he walked out into the lake to meet them! And the next day the crowds come hunting for more bread!

And Jesus talks to them about the Bread from the Father, and the Manna - he is reminding them of the passover meal, when they remember Moses taking them out of exile, and giving them manna - food from heaven.

And you may remember that the people grumbled in the wilderness, they complained. And what does John say they do here - the Jews began to grumble about him!

Why are they grumbling - Because Jesus claims to be that food - sent from heaven!

I am the bread come down from heaven

Like the conversation in Chapter 4, with the woman at the well - she's on one level, Jesus is on another.

They are saying - he didn't come down from heaven, we know where he came from - there's Joseph, there's Mary!

They can't grasp (and why should they?) that he might come from Mary and from heaven..

Jesus try's to help them to see that he's not talking literally about bread, but figuratively, spiritually. About this bread as "the essentials of life".

He tries to help them by pointing back to the old testament - or their bible - not old at all!

In the old testament, bread stands for wisdom.. - a way of life that nourishes us and nurtures us..

Proverbs - Chapter 9 - Wisdom calls out - come, eat of my bread, drink of my wine  
She does not mean real bread. - this is metaphorical,  
v 6 - Leave your simple ways and you will live;  
walk in the way of insight."

*[So he's saying - I'm talking about spiritual bread, bread as a metaphor for wisdom.*

*For wisdom gives life, and leads to life and happiness and peace.*

*And Folly - its opposite in the bible - leads to death, discord, chaos and alienation from God.*

*I could say more - how Wisdom is feminine, how it is seen as part of the nature of God - in Job - when the world was created, wisdom says - I was there when the the sea was shut in with its doors, when the storehouses with snow where there, or*

*what time the deer are calved... And Wisdom can be another name for the holy spirit - that which Jesus promises to give to believers, to bubble up within them as a spring, as source of eternal life..*

*That living water. - remember from the the woman at the well  
And here Jesus talks about the living bread...*

*The bread that gives life - not once off gift of life, but constantly]*

And that's echoed in Isaiah 55 -  
"Come, all you who are thirsty,  
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

God's wisdom is free to all - you just have to ask.  
You don't need to be rich, or famous, or clever.

But you'll have spotted that Jesus doesn't say - come eat of my bread.. he says -  
The prophets say: They will all be taught by God

So what you need to know here is that each sabbath, Friday, there was a portion of Scripture that was read - like our lectionary. And these blocks, these portions, are well known, still used today. And the bit that starts - the first line - is They will all be taught by God - is Isaiah 54.

And it goes on to say - Why spend money on what is not bread,  
and your labor on what does not satisfy?  
Which Jesus says in verse 27.

So by saying the first line of the Haftarah - he's pointing to the whole section - just like if I said - in the beginning was the word and the word was with god - you'd know I was referring to John's gospel. Well, some of you might. I think Jesus was banking on their having good bible knowledge here!

So have they grasped it yet - Jesus says he is the bread of life  
The living bread. Eat of this bread and live.

Now leaving aside all sorts of textual, interpretive, issues about the last line - my flesh given for the life of the world -  
You have some choices now about how you understand, what you think Jesus meant by eat of this bread and life — and you can agree with one, or all of them, or none!

One option is -  
The bread is himself, offered on the cross, taken, blessed, broken, given  
And to eat it - means to accept that he died for me, for my sins, and he gives me life by setting me free.

Another options is -  
The bread is communion - this meal we do in remembrance

And to eat, is literally to eat. Jesus said, this is my body, given for you.

Another option

Is that the bread is his way of living - so not his life, physically, but his whole life - the way he forgives, the way he loves all people, the way he fights for truth and justice, the way he resists evil without violence, living simply - basically the kingdom!

If that is the bread, his life - then eating it, is us living that life

And living it with him - in us, united with him, he dwells in the church - we're his body!

So you can choose whether Jesus being the bread of life is a once for all thing, or a regular communion type thing, or an every day every moment thing - or all 3 or something else.

I, personally, I, think - Jesus is saying that bread is an every day, essential, item. And he too is an every day, every moment, essential.

If you want your body to stay alive - eat bread

If you want to live.... Live the best, most fulfilling, challenging, rewarding, spiritual life - the essential is Jesus.

Jesus when I wake up

Jesus in each conversation

Thank you Jesus for the food I have

Can I help someone Jesus

Can I use what you've give me?

Can I give of myself completely to you

- and with you, in you, through you - to the world?

Can I live a life where you surround and fill me - you are my everything

My daily bread?

Then I will know what it is to live, and never die.