

Sunday 19th August

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

John 6: 51-58.



What do you see? A person. Keep looking there is more there!

The people in the synagogue have known Jesus - they have said

" Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we known?"

But in Capernaum he is declaring he is more than a carpenter, a man of Nazareth, even more than a prophet, a miracle worker who has by God's power, fed 5000 from a handful of loaves and fishes. There is more there. He says:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world."

1. Wonderful words. The focus is upon bread because the previous discussions have moved from wanting food that fills their bellies to spiritual food that endures for ever. Jesus believes they only seek him because he has fed them - which in an area of poverty, as much of Galilee was, food was an important concern. The discussion develops as he used images they are thinking about. He says he is *the bread of life* - whoever comes to him will be filled, spiritually filled - not left spiritually hungry or spiritually thirsty. He goes on to say - their ancestors in the deserts, as they were delivered from slavery in Egypt, and travelled for 40 years, in the desert lands, they were fed miraculously by manna. But they ate that bread and yet they still died a natural death. Yet Jesus says, those who eat this bread - who believe and trust in him - will not be conquered by death but will have everlasting, eternal life.

He moves on to teach about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. We hear him say - v54 'whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will have eternal life.' Earlier, v47 'I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.' Everlasting life is connected to faith. And then a few sentences later, everlasting life is

connected to eating and drinking. The latter points to the former. The latter a picture of the former. Augustine said: "believe and you have eaten."

2.The word *anyone* stands out. When we read it here and we read the ongoing verses, Jesus offer to receive life, eternal life, through him is extended to anyone. This is wonderful and very humbling. You are anyone. I am anyone. There is no requirements made bar faith is there? Nothing about age. Or background. Or nationality. The offer is there.

It is humbling. Because I have done nothing. My sin and failure would surely mean I would be at the back of the queue to receive such an offer. One of the songs we sing here - by Casting Crowns...

Who am I, that the lord of all the earth
Would care to know my name
Would care to feel my hurt?
Who am I, that the bright and morning star
Would choose to light the way
For my ever wandering heart?

Not because of who I am
But because of what You've done
Not because of what I've done
But because of who You are

Who am I? One loved. One deeply valued. One to whom the offer of eternal life was or has been or is being offered. Our response I guess is thank you - in silence - thank you, that anyone can eat of the bread from heaven. Thank you that anyone includes me...

3. And think of those words - anyone, whoever, whoever. It is language of invitation of offering. Jesus offering himself to us. In fact the image is like that of it is a gift on a hand. You can choose to take it or not. It is not held in a closed fist that you to prise it out, by a load of religious things you need to do or things you will promise. An open hand offering his gift to us.

And this is all about grace. A wonderful word we need to soak in often. As many of us have been on holidays and taken time to soak, or do things we perhaps forget about or doing have time to do, maybe from time to time we just need to soak in GRACE! To meditate on what Jesus says. Grace we have said is about getting what we do not deserve. Mercy is about not getting what we do deserve.

There was a painter. A grandfather. He came to his granddaughters home. And a point came in the day when the granddaughter wanted something, her parents said no, the girl insisted, not nice words were used, and so the granddaughter was punished - sent to stand in a corner of the room, looking at the wall... The grandfather did or said nothing - a wise grandparent.

The visit ended and he went on his way. But you know, the next day, he came back, with his paints and he went to that corner, and he painted rabbits playing, beautiful flowers, wonderful birds horses resting. He did it, so the next time his granddaughter would have to stand in that corner - she's had have something beautiful to look at. That's grace - we get what we don't deserve. The Lord Jesus in that synagogue offers to all - they don't need to earn it, they just need to receive it, his gift on an open hand...

4. Now when you read writers, thinkers, many will see here a connection to Holy Communion, to Eucharist. We of course hear Jesus say about the bread -

"this is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. the wine - this cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

But we need to remember that there is no explicit reference to Communion here. It is a year before it is instituted. His main concern as we have said is for the listeners to understand where and how true life from God can be received...

BUT this imagery does help us value the Eucharist even more deeply. One way to suggest. John Wesley - Anglican minister who helped establish Methodism - called Communion a **confirming** and **converting** ordinance. As you come and take bread and wine, it reminds us and do remind yourself of the promises, belief in Jesus. eating the flesh, drinking the blood, means whoever and anyone receives eternal life, whoever believes, remains in him and he in us, and if death comes for us, we will be victorious over it. A Confirming ordinance - it strengthens and deepens and renews our faith.

But also it is a converting ordinance. As you come. To receive, as we consider what this represents, we say to the Lord I cannot save myself, I cannot earn eternal life. Of us coming back to the Lord. A very tangible way of saying, once again...

(Jesus be the centre - A song by Michael Frye, Vineyard Music)

Lord, you be my centre,

Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light

Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song

Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide
Jesus

A friend, Justin, he was at High School with me. He was very bright. Went on to study in Cambridge. A met him about 10 years later. He said he had become a Christian. He had gone to the same church as I, and like I, he didn't have a living faith. After University, his life began to go wrong and he made some bad choices he shared, including getting caught in some bad habits.

He eventually came back home. And he knew about the faith, he'd been confirmed. And he shared he remembered being in church with his mum, he needed God in his life, and it was a Communion service and he shared that he knew, to go and receive bread and wine would mean accepting Jesus - to let him be lord of his life - for Jesus had said this is my body, my blood. And so Justin chose to go up, he went and he experienced God's presence powerfully as he took the bread and wine... It was a converting ordinance for him. It converted him to the Lord.



A picture. One person or is there more?

Jesus wants the listeners to see he is more than someone they know - he offers anyone, whoever, the gift of eternal life, on an

open hand, a gift of grace for who would eat this bread from heaven, who would believe in him...