



Readings, Reflection & Prayers
Ninth Sunday after Trinity
1 August 2021



www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

What exactly does Jesus mean when he says that he is the bread of life? In the gospel reading, Jesus, having satisfied the hunger of the 5000, looks back to the Israelites in the wilderness as they were fed with the manna provided by God. Yet, like them, do we not yearn for something more than full stomachs?

Contents

Readings for this Sunday	p. 2-3
Reflection	p. 3-4
Prayers	p. 5-6
Parish Prayers	p. 6-7
Church Opening Times	p. 7

Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read in your bibles at home.

Exodus 16.2-4, 9-15

Ephesians 4.1-16

John 6. 24-35

So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do to perform the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' Then Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from

heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’

Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’

Reflection by Canon Kevin Walton, Acting Dean of St. Albans Abbey

In the twentieth century, the psychologist Abraham Maslow came up with a well-known hierarchy of needs, often depicted as a pyramid. At its base, are our physical needs (food, drink), then comes the need for ‘safety’, then for ‘love and belonging’, esteem, and finally, what he calls, self-actualization.

This Sunday’s reading from John chapter 6 also suggests to me a hierarchy of needs. We start at base level, and physical hunger: Jesus has just feed 5000 in the wilderness. Then, they want to make him king: perhaps this is a need for safety, safety from the Roman oppressors, and for belonging and esteem, to restore national pride and freedom.

So Jesus gives them the slip and crosses the lake (Galilee) with his disciples, and there follows a sort of game of hide and seek, and the people find him. Now Jesus points that their only interest is in getting more bread. So he tells them not to work for food which perishes, but for food which endures for eternal life. In other words, to look to a higher need.

There are echoes here of today’s first reading from the book of Exodus, and the Israelites in the wilderness: these complained of hunger, and God (through Moses) gave manna, bread from heaven. But it did not last: the people tried to keep this manna overnight, but it went mouldy; and neither did this monotonous, daily diet satisfy them, ultimately. So, now, when the crowd demands from Jesus a sign like the manna which Moses had provided, he reminds them that it is not manna that they ultimately need, it is something more.

To say that the material does not ultimately satisfy is nothing new. Most of us – all of us, maybe – would agree. But the urge of the material is powerful, maybe because of that instinct to survive, because it remains our base need, it never goes away. And, it seems more real and tangible. When the

stomach is empty, it complains noisily. We cannot hide it – or silence it! Jesus does not deny this – after all, he has fed them with bread.

But what about my spiritual lack? How do I notice that? What would my life be like if I stopped believing? Or if I starved that belief of sustenance? The worry is: maybe I would hardly notice at all. Which leads to another question, if I may put it like this: is Jesus really the bread of my life, or the icing on the cake? The bit I tend to when everything else is in place.

So Jesus points us to higher level on hierarchy of our needs, he says, ‘Work for that which endures for eternal life.’ And the people get this, to a degree. ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ they ask. To a faithful Jew to perform a work of God is to obey a commandment. And the real manna, the true bread of life, is the Torah, the Jewish Law which came down from heaven at Mt Sinai. This was the profounder miracle in the wilderness, and it is on this, not on bread alone, on which we live. As the psalmist says, ‘How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth.’

Now Jesus says, ‘I am the bread of life,’ the word of God in person; and our *work*, our nourishment, is to believe in him.

There is more to follow from this, but that is in next week’s reading, about how Jesus gives his life for the world; and how this is real eating and drinking, and so the Eucharist; and fact we really eat and really drink of Jesus, week by week, in the Eucharist, shows that our need for him is as real and as elemental, as our need for bread and water.

This past year, been made more aware of our needs: the supply of food, from farm to supermarket; of safety, especially in public health. So, our Cathedral here, as our churches throughout diocese, are holy places, where people encounter God, but we have become mindful that a holy place needs to be safe place – safe, in terms of public health, but also of safeguarding and wellbeing. We have become aware too of need for love and fellowship, for communal gatherings and celebrations.

These are all important, but ultimately they point to that deepest need, our need for God whom we encounter in Jesus, the bread of life. So again, my question is: is Jesus for me the bread of life, or simply the icing on cake?

Prayers

Collect for this Sunday

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our day,
and make her holy, strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Give us honest hearts, O God,
and send your kindly Spirit
to help us confess our sins
and bring us the peace of your forgiveness;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lord God, whose Son, Jesus Christ,
understood people's fear and pain
before they spoke of them,
we pray for those in hospital;
surround the frightened with your tenderness;
give strength to those in pain;
hold the weak in your arms of love,
and give hope and patience
to those who are recovering;
we ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer for:

Sunday	Church of the Province of South East Asia
Monday	The Diocese of Dogura – The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea
Tuesday	The Diocese of Doko – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Wednesday	The Diocese of Dominican Republic – The Episcopal Church
Thursday	The Diocese of Dornakal – The (united) Church of South India
Friday	The Diocese of Down & Dromore – The Church of Ireland
Saturday	The Diocese of Dublin & Glendalough – The Church of Ireland

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Prison Chaplains
Monday	Mental Health Chaplains
Tuesday	Parish of Wareside, Holy Trinity (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Wednesday	Parish of Waterford, St Michael and All Angels (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Thursday	Parish of Watton-at-Stone (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Friday	Parish of Widford (Deanery of Hertford and Ware)
Saturday	Parish of Great Wymondley (Deanery of Hitchin)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Knowle Drive, Leycroft Way
Monday	Lilac Way, Limbrick Road
Tuesday	Linwood Road, Loire Mews
Wednesday	Long Buftlers, Longfield Road
Thursday	Magna Close, Maple Cottages
Friday	Meadow Walk, Meadway
Saturday	Mons Close, Nairn Close

The Sick:

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris, Emma and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Ken Bolt

On their year's mind:

Vera Lange, Fred Dagnall, Jean Shannon, John Muspratt, Christine Gee, Ken Hollows, Cynthia Southern, Margaret Baxter, Robert Bashford, Derek Baker.

Church Opening times**Other services / in Church congregation**

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short Family service on Sunday 19 September at 4.00 pm

Private Prayer

- Saturday opening (in addition to Sunday), 11.00am – 4.00pm

A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).