

Sermon - 1 Kings 19.4-8; Psalm 34.1-8; Ephesians 4.25-5.2; John 6.35,45-51

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

This week we are invited to think about the assumptions we make about ourselves, about others – and about Jesus....

As I go through these questions*, give yourself a 'quick-fire' test to see what might come to mind – and perhaps revisit later at home...

So: Think about yourself:

- What type of person do you show other people?
- What assumptions might people make about you?
- How does it feel when people make the wrong assumptions about you?
- Do people make assumptions about your Christian faith? How do you feel about this?
- What does God see when he looks at you?

Think about other people:

- Do you ever make assumptions about others?
- Have you ever unfairly judged someone based on what you have assumed about them?
- What can you do to make sure you don't make the wrong assumptions about others?
- Can you see others as God sees them?

Think about Jesus

- What type of person is Jesus to you?
- If he had been someone who lived in your neighbourhood and then started speaking in public about being the bread of life and the one who would ensure that nobody would hunger or thirst if they followed him in the world – on the journey of life – AND on to eternal life – WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE THOUGHT – what would you have assumed about him...

It seemed that people didn't think Jesus could be Joseph's son and someone as special as the one who is inviting them to follow him to eternal life....

Do you think that today we assume certain things about certain people based on where they come from and where they work and how they dress?

Well people were assuming all sorts of things about Jesus – he couldn't possibly be like those from their history – people like Moses and Elijah and David – who were given transforming lives – ordinary lives used for extraordinary work in God's world. someone

'A leopard can't change his spots' comes to mind. But I have seen – no, I have experienced - that statement to not always be true – but the changing of spots doesn't come from our efforts, but from the grace of God sent to us in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus who is at the centre of our being - and that is the key.

When someone is touched by the Holy Spirit, all sorts of ordinary can become used in the most extraordinary way – even great people of faith – and of the church, those who have had huge impact on the greater good of humanity were people who had begun their journey of faith going along to church and sitting where you and I take our seats – and who have opened their hearts to being led by God's spirit and followed Jesus to be led to their own bread of heaven – to that place where hunger and thirst – spiritual hunger and thirst is no more – but where hunger and thirst for justice, goodness, peace and truth becomes compelling and urgent and the purpose of a purpose-filled life in the name of God.

Assumptions we have about ourselves and our worth and God's call on our lives – our everyday lives – can limit us. This is deep teaching for us today and one which we can slowly work through together.

This is John's Gospel, who is takes us deeper into the understanding of how we are one with God the Father through Jesus. We have to take tiny steps with this teaching – bite size chunks of mystical truths about ourselves in our truest sense....

To let go of the security of material things to become led by the one who assures us that he is the bread of life – and that we won't go hungry if we trust and follow – is hard, but important and crucial to our understanding of true life.

So important, that Jesus says it twice here;

'Jesus said to the crowd, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

'Do not complain among yourselves' *he says*: 'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God."

'Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

And this is the mystical message of the day – that God will call us and draw us to Jesus who in turn will raise us up – that is - raise us up out of an assumption that material things and experiences and appearances – and takes us deeper into trust and faith into the unseen spiritual security that comes in knowing that God is with us and present in all that we do and will work for good through the spirit – in the name of Jesus – when we follow that call on our hearts and our lives, not matter how confusing or scary that might be, but trusting that this is the way and no other way is going to work for us now...

And here is the biggest assumption – the one we have about God – the one about God being 'out there – and up there' – but not here in our hearts and in all that we do...

And it is this assumption that is so shown to us today through these deep teachings of Jesus from this one of seven 'I am' sayings of Jesus – 'I am the bread of life'

And as we hold this on our hearts – we can connect this teaching of Jesus for us today more clearly with Paul's teaching to the church at Ephesus as he continues to unpack what it takes to build up a sustainable, faithful community of followers of Jesus.

The 'bread of life' that is given here is the bread of kindness and forgiveness and love – bread that nourishes and builds up – not one that breaks down. We are being taught how to be a first-century church in a twenty-first century world – and whatever the different scenery of needs and demands St Peter's has compared to the church at Ephesus back then, we are all being called to work out the goodness of God's grace in our church-life and in every aspect of our lives.

Say's Paul: 'Let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.... Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And there - I think - we can leave our 'bread of life' meditations for today - as we think about what our fragrant offerings and sacrifices to God might be -- what our bread of heaven offerings might look like in our everyday lives - trusting that no matter how small or ordinary they might seem to us, they will be put to extraordinary work in the world to shine a light on the building up of goodness and love of God – as they are given, received and offered out in the name of Jesus.

Jesus said: 'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ... Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.'

Amen

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