

John 6: 35 – 40 Jesus said, ' I am the bread of life'. Linda E Hunter

There are many stories behind that word bread. The story of the manna which God fed to the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years and which kept them alive. The story of the feeding of the 5,000 on the hillside which took place the day before this reading in John's gospel. When the gathering crowds continue following Jesus, questioning him, '*What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?*' They really were wanting more food or some other tangible signs, so they could believe. They refer to the manna which Moses provided in the wilderness, but Jesus reminds them it was not Moses but God who supplied the bread from heaven, the bread of God which came down from heaven and gave life to the world. But the crowd increase their request: 'give us this bread always' (v. 34),

So, Jesus then addresses them saying, '*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*' When he says this the crowd appear astounded - food that endures for eternal life, bread from heaven. They don't understand that the bread he is talking about can't be eaten. They can't comprehend what he means. It seems very evident that they were willing to accept all they could get in the way of food or even miracles of healing from Jesus, but they were less eager, and found it difficult to accept, *the bread of life*, which was what Jesus had come to give. They would much rather have food to eat than a relationship with God.

What Jesus really wants them to grasp is that *the bread of life* is not a temporary solution, that stops physical hunger. *The bread of life* satisfies spiritual hunger, it provides all that they, and we, need to grow spiritually.

This is the living bread. Living bread is given as a gift to us all – we only need to believe. But of course, believing carries a level of commitment, to follow Christ.

Following Christ involves putting our faith and trust in all that he is, all that he says and all that he alone can do. It doesn't matter who we are, what we do or where we are, as we accept the grace and hope that God gives us we find we are called to be his chosen people, to reflect him in all that we do. Every day we make choices about how we live, what kind of person we will be, of how we will follow his commandments and encourage others to do this too. The reality is that each day as we move onward, and ever closer to God we find in him forgiveness and new life.

We are called to believe and place our faith in God the living bread.

We are all spiritual beings and we hunger for that bread of life, that living bread we want to receive . It is Christ alone who satisfies our spiritual hunger and sustains us. This is what the *bread of life* is, being sustained by Jesus even in the most difficult of times.

That *bread of life* is at the heart of the Eucharist which we celebrate today. But we can sometimes be so involved in life and what we are doing or think we need to do, that we fail to see this most amazing thing of all, that Christ comes to us in bread and wine and is present here today.

The bread of life is Christ's own flesh, given for the life of the world. John in his gospel doesn't tell us of the last supper, but here he tells us of that profound truth, that Christ's life was given for us, that only through his broken body, and only through his shed blood can we have eternal life.

Augustine defined the sacrament as "visible words"—actions that speak of the love and forgiveness of God. This is what we experience every time we gather together around the Lord's table for communion. We are given once again the chance to recommit ourselves as a follower of Christ, to feel Christ's forgiveness and to experience the nourishment of the bread of life, in this sacrament. As Christ unites his presence with the bread and wine, we unite our lives with his, so that he may live in us and we in him.

Jesus, the living bread of life, invites us to **come** to him as we are. He takes the ordinariness of our daily lives and transforms each of us (beyond our wildest imaginations) into what he wants us to be, which is far more than we ever thought or hoped we could be.

Here is a gift beyond price from God to you. Here is the bread of life who will satisfy you when you are hungry and nourish you so that you can grow, and sustain you in the darkest times, and who will be there in every season of this life and who will call you and draw you into life eternal.

He enriches our lives and enables us to be God's people together in this community. He is indeed the *bread of life* the living bread.

Let us remember this morning as we receive communion that Jesus said '*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*'