

## Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

### Worship at Home 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021

#### Jesus is the Bread of Life

If you read my 4<sup>th</sup> July Service, entitled 'Who Do You Say I am?', you may recall we thought about all the Names of Jesus we find in Mark's Gospel, and for the sermon my theme was Jesus is the Bread of Life, as we studied the Miracle of Feeding the 4000. This time I want us to study that theme again, looking in more detail at what Jesus meant by describing himself as bread, with the help of John's Gospel this time.

#### Call to worship *based on Psalm 78*

The Lord God opened the doors of heaven;  
and rained down manna to eat;  
he gave them the grain of heaven.  
They ate the bread of angels;  
and they were well filled.  
We come to you, Lord Jesus, bread of life,  
to be filled and sustained  
to be renewed, encouraged and blessed.  
Let us join together in worship, as we come to  
hear the words that Jesus taught us;  
that the word of God is the food we need to  
keep us spiritually healthy in hearts and  
minds, just as the food God provides keeps  
our bodies healthy. Amen

#### Hymn 254

- 1 Seek ye first the kingdom of God,  
and his righteousness,  
and all these things shall be added unto you;  
Allelu-, alleluia:  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,  
allelu-, alleluia!
- 2 Ask, and it shall be given unto you;  
seek and ye shall find;  
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you;  
Allelu-, alleluia:
- 3 We shall not live by bread alone,  
but by every word  
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;  
Allelu-, alleluia:

*Karen Lafferty (b. 1948)*

#### Prayers of adoration and confession

Christ the living God,  
we adore you and bless you,  
for you give us the essentials in life –  
but most of all you give us yourself,  
the living bread.  
Lord, give us eyes to see – to really see;  
hearts that believe – really believe;  
minds that understand – really understand;  
and lives that proclaim you as the living bread  
to all who are in any kind of need.  
Help us to be slow to complain,  
Help us to be quick to share.  
And help us to be believers in you,  
our Friend, our Teacher and our Saviour.

Forgive us, Lord, when we use people  
and value them only for what they can give us,  
not for who they really are.  
Forgive us Lord, when we say words that are  
hurtful and unkind  
Help us to be like you, Lord,  
generous in our giving,  
kind and loving towards others  
and obedient in service to you.  
Lord, may we never be hungry for knowledge  
of you;  
May our thirst for you sustain us through all  
our days;  
For we are assured that our lives will always  
be filled with your love,  
when we trust and believe in you,  
Our Saviour who is the Son of God. Amen

#### Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the  
glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I used to work in a playgroup, and a regular activity was to take some flour, a little oil and stir in water to make a dough – Playdough. Basic, simple ingredients found in most kitchens, quite inconsequential on their own, but mixed to a dough and it becomes a favourite activity of small children, and a great one for us staff, as an opportunity to sit and talk to them as we pull and stretch the dough. However, it can get sticky, so more often than not, the dough would be cooked slowly in a pan. It becomes firmer, more malleable. You can roll it and mould it, create all sorts of things.

But one thing I loved doing, was to add a fourth ingredient, where a child's eyes would be opened in wonder. Add yeast, mix it, knead it, then leave it, covered in a bowl. 15 mins later, what do we find? How has it changed? What made it grow? I would leave some yeast in a jug of water and sugar, so we could watch it bubble, froth and grow, then explain how yeast is a living thing like us. Just as children eat food and grow, so does yeast.

Yeast is mentioned in the Bible, but perhaps Jesus missed an opportunity. He never described himself as yeast. Yet to make bread tasty and best, we need yeast in the dough. Consider yourself as a handful of flour, you're nothing special – quite ordinary. But stir in some Christ yeast, and you will change. Sit awhile and contemplate as you come to meet Jesus, feel his presence stirring within, and you will grow. And with the help of the Bible and other Christians praying for you - working you, kneading you with encouragement and commitment, sit awhile once more, and that growth continues - but you will still be stretchy and elastic, easily pulled in the wrong direction. You need the heat – the flame – of the Spirit to cook you, to develop that crust that allows you to be firm bread, and ready to be rolled out into the world as nourishment to satisfy someone who needs to know the love the Jesus in their lives, just as you had.

Could you be a bread roll to someone today?

In John's Gospel, after Jesus had fed the 5000, he withdrew into the mountains, sending his disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee without him. The crowds realise they have gone without Jesus, in the only boat available, so when some other boats arrive, they use them to cross to Capernaum in the hope that Jesus will soon join his disciples again. Lets continue the story ...

### **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.'

### Hymn: 465

- 1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore;  
feed me now and evermore.
- 2 Open thou the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream shall flow;  
let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield;  
be thou still my strength and shield.
- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to thee;  
I will ever give to thee.

William Williams (1717-1791)  
translated by Peter Williams (1727-1796)

### Word

*Have you been to a market where a trader  
loudly advertises his goods?*

Today's special offer is 'The Bread of Life' – as much as you can eat!  
Fast food? Junk food? Forget it!  
Health food? Real food? Forget that too!  
What you really need is food that feeds your soul, food that nourishes your spirit, food that keeps you going not only all day but all the way to eternal life.  
No other supplements needed.  
There's only one producer of this product: Jesus Christ. Franchises are available in a town near you: visit your local church now to ask about this special offer. Lifelong guarantee of quality and satisfaction (terms and conditions apply).  
*from Roots on the web*

Following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus disappears, prompting some of the crowd to search for him. They find Jesus on the other side of the lake and clearly want another encounter with the man who

provided a miraculous picnic.

But Jesus tells them off!

Suggesting they'd only looked for him because he gave them food, and were looking for signs of his power from God that are only physical, they were comparing him to Moses. But it wasn't Moses who provided the manna in the desert. As we read in Exodus 16, it came from heaven, from God.

The people are still looking for a daily bread like the Israelites received in the desert, a physical food they can eat everyday.

Let's not forget, the people seeking Jesus were frequently hungry - no supermarkets laden with foods. The food on offer would be what was available locally - and what was in season. And being poor, you may not be able to buy much. Consider also, the type of people who are following Jesus. They can't have had regular day jobs like we're used to, they followed Jesus around for several days at a time. So the worry of where the next meal was coming from was a real concern.

But Jesus wants them to look beyond that, not to be concerned about lunch time, but to be concerned about a spiritual time.

Jesus is talking of a spiritual satisfaction of hunger. God provides this "bread of heaven", and that bread is Jesus himself. If they want to be truly satisfied, they need to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And the same is true for us. We need to believe in and trust in Jesus as our bread of life.

Are we like the people Jesus spoke to? Do we look for the signs of God's love for us as the things we see in our worship; those times we listen to the words of scripture and our preachers, those times we sing and pray, those times we feel satisfied that God is here – among us now. But that is not the way to live, that's a kind of physical faith, what we feel today, right now. But will that sustain you until next Sunday?

We need to trust and believe that at all times, God provides for our daily needs, and be satisfied with that. We also need to consider

that it's not about "What can Jesus do for me?". It's about "Who is Jesus?". Until we know who Jesus really is, we cannot begin to understand what Jesus can do for us. Jesus can only be a miracle worker, a brilliant storyteller or a healer, until you acknowledge he is the Son of God.

When we acknowledge God sent Jesus to live among us as "God among us", then we realise that we are being offered so much more. There is a heaven sent reward here, a heavenly manna, a heavenly daily bread.

But there are terms and conditions attached, as our street vendor said earlier. The taking of this bread requires something in return. Just as the manna from heaven meant the people had to go out and collect it, grind it and then make it into a type of bread, so we need to work too.

Christ needs to be invited into our daily living, to join us on our daily walk though life in order to maintain our spiritual well-being. We cannot know God without knowing Jesus; "whoever believes in me will see the Father" he says.

It sounds so simple, but is actually quite demanding. By taking the bread of life that is Jesus, we have to live a life of faith in return. We have to believe in Jesus, we have to trust that God will provide for us, which is not easy when we are worried about money, health, family or friends. It is not easy to have a faith when we live in a world so damaged and broken and there's no sign of peace on earth. That's why Jesus said "I am the bread". We need something we can reach out for everyday, something to satisfy that inner hunger of worry, doubt and inadequacy. Have you ordered your delivery of daily bread from heaven today? Amen.

#### **Prayers for Others**

Gracious God, we pray for those who find it hard to believe that their lives can change; for those who feel they will never have enough money to live on; for those who feel they will never find work;

for those who despair that there will ever be peace in their country;  
for those who despair that they will ever be well;  
for those who have given up believing that they can be forgiven;  
for those who struggle to go on believing in themselves;  
and those who struggle to go on believing in you.  
Lord, be their strength, be their assurance and be their hope.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **Hymn 706**

- 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts.*  
*Shine through the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in your Church gathered today.*
- 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.
- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.
- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others,  
walls made of living stone.
- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

#### **Sending out prayer**

As we seek to do your will,  
may we bring bread to the hungry,  
feeding body and soul, offer strength for the  
journey and hope for the future.  
Amen.

Kathy Lowrie