

## ***“I am the living bread that came down from heaven”***

(John 6. 51)

**SPRINGLINE PARISH - TRINITY 12 B – 19.8.2018**

Prayer

Testimony

Prayer cards : “Every Christian is a missionary” (Archbishop Justin Welby)

### **Introduction: The gospel of today – John 6. 51-58**

The Word of God today puts before us that most fascinating, and probably intriguing, words of Jesus : *“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.”* (John 6.51)

Again in verses 53, 54, 56, 57 and 58, he repeats these word as if to impress upon us that he is indeed the true ‘bread of life’. We have actually been reading chapter 6 of John in the past weeks and we have heard this message again and again.

The people had witnessed the feeding of the 5000; they have seen Jesus healing people with all sorts of illnesses; they have heard him teach of a kingdom he wishes to establish; they have heard him say astonishing things like

*“I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no one can come to the Father except through me”* (John 14.6) or,

*“I have come that they may life and have it in abundance”* (John 10.10).

But none of his sayings have been as astonishing as the words he utters today and that which we have heard.

*“I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.”* (John 6.35)

*“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.”* (John 6.51)

### **The context of the Gospel of John**

Let us try to understand this message of Jesus in the context of the gospel of John and the Johannine Community which had its beginnings in the earliest days of Christianity. It has had close contacts

with a primitive Jewish-Christian understanding of Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet and the fulfilment of the Scriptures. But later a mounting tension between the Johannine community and the synagogue seems to have led eventually to the complete expulsion of the community from the synagogue and this forcible cutting away from its Jewish roots have had profound impact on the community's thinking and belief. It is in this context of tension and even persecution that John stoutly affirms belief in Jesus and in his saving life, death and resurrection. *"These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20.31).

### **Jesus the living bread that gives life to the world**

Jesus clearly tells the crowd that follows him that he is not merely speaking about earthly food but rather about something more significant. He is simply and directly telling us that he himself is, and ought to be, our real food, our real drink. Now here, we are talking about our deep-seated longings of our souls, our spirits. He is alluding to the fact that there is a part of us that is physical and material; but there is also a part of us that is spiritual and immaterial and only he can fulfil and satisfy that part of our inner selves.

No matter what we do, where we go, however much we strive, Jesus wants to tell us that the visible, material world cannot fully satisfy our deepest needs. In short, Jesus is telling us today : *Only God can satisfy your deepest needs and with him you will have everything.*

He repeats this message time and time again. *"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."* (Matthew 6.33) Luke has similar words: *"Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind.....instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well."*(Luke 12.29.31)

The problem with us is that we have become so secular, so devoid of spiritual sensibilities, so empty of spiritual wealth, so naïve and so cynical about the spiritual realities that we think the world is all that is there. *"The world is too much with us"* wrote the poet Thomas Hardy. How true! It is so difficult to see beyond the visible; we are so blind.

## **Christian life is living in Jesus, abiding in Jesus**

The Word of God clearly challenges us to turn to God, to turn to Jesus Christ as our real food, as our real drink, in the sense of making Christ the centre of our lives, in the sense of giving faith in Christ the absolute dominion in our lives.

We all know what it means to be physically hungry, what it means to be thirsty; some time or other we have experienced hunger and thirst for one reason or another. But we also have a spiritual hunger, equally or even more strong, that gnaws at our hearts, our souls. Only God can fill that void; nothing else can. That is why we must listen to the words of Jesus today,

*“I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.”* (John 6.35)

*“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.”* (John 6.51)

## **The transforming power of a personal relationship with Christ**

In fact, the crowds asked Jesus: *“What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?”* Jesus; gave them this answer, *“This is working for God; you must believe in the one he has sent.”* (John 6. 28-29)

It all finally comes down to this – your faith in Jesus Christ. This is where the Jews failed to recognise and accept Jesus as the Messiah. That is the real problem and the real question here : How strong is your faith in God? How deep is your relationship of faith with Jesus Christ? Only you can answer this; only you can decide to heed his words:

*“I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst.”* (John 6.35)

*“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.”* (John 6.51)

## **Conclusion: Christian life is a decisive option for Christ**

John brings the reader to a point of decision, as stated in the express goal of writing: *“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20.31).

Knowing no middle course, John presents only two possibilities: to perish or to have eternal life (John 3.16). Humankind is inexorably faced with these alternatives, caught in a struggle between cosmic forces. On one side is darkness (blindness, evil, this world, the Prince of this world) and on the other is light (sight, the Spirit, life). To choose darkness means death, but the possibility of light and life has now been revealed in Jesus Christ.

We judge ourselves by our own free decision for or against the revelation of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ. *We can gaze upon him and be saved.* (cf. also John 3. 13-14; 8.28; 12. 32; 19.37)

(Notes: cf. NJBC (Geoffrey Chapman London)1994, p.1418,1426)

(ST Mattapally)

*Prayer of the Day (personalised) Trinity 12 18*

Most loving and dear heavenly Father,  
you love us so much that you have sent your own son  
Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord;  
In him you give us hope for living on this earth  
and hope also of living eternally in heaven;  
as we listen to the words of your son today

*“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.”*

(John 6.51)

help us to turn to Jesus as our real life-giving food  
that fills our hearts and our spirits  
and find in him the answer  
for all our questions, problems and anguishes;  
help us to re-discover Jesus your Son  
and renew our lives in him,  
life now and life for ever.

We make this prayer for Jesus’s sake.

Amen.