

JOHN 6 v 25-35 LULLINGSTONE 06.10.19

Today we celebrate Harvest, but as we have a Harvest Evensong service here this afternoon, my sermon this morning is only going to be about bread.

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."*

This was the first of the seven 'I Am' statements Jesus made.

2. *"I am the light of the world". (John 8:12)*
3. *"I am the door". (John 10:9)*
4. *"I am the good shepherd". (John 10:11)*
5. *"I am the resurrection and the life". (John 11:25)*
6. *"I am the way and the truth and the life". (John 14:6)*
7. *"I am the vine". (John 15:5)*

What does Jesus mean by I am the bread of life? How can he satisfy our hunger and our thirst?

When I eat a huge meat free burger and loads of chips, or a nut roast with all the trimmings, I think, when I feel I can eat no more, "Why do I do that to myself"? If I continue to eat like that I'll look like the Michelin Man. Why didn't I just order a salad?" We enjoy fine dining and quality food. In our society we sometimes drive great distances to eat at our favourite restaurants. We spend good money. We want a good atmosphere, good service and, we can be very passionate when it comes to food.

But it wasn't what goes into our stomachs that Jesus was talking about, I believe what Jesus was trying to do was to get his listeners then, and us now, to be passionate about matters of faith. He wants us to desire food for the soul in the way we desire food for our stomachs.

Have you ever had a passion for something or some goal? To what extent were you are you willing to go to reach your dream.

I want to tell you a story about a boy who through his faith and belief in god he was able to achieve his dream.

In October, 1958, a boy named Legson Kayira, aged 16 of Nyasaland, (now Malawi), Africa, decided that the only way to achieve a college degree was to go to the United States. So he set out on foot to do so. he was determined to get a college education in America. With a five day supply of food, a small axe for protection, a blanket, a Bible and a copy of Pilgrim's Progress, he set out.

When he reached Kampala in Uganda he saw the name of Skagit Valley College, Washington State, in a US Information service directory, so he applied and was awarded a place and a scholarship. Kayira then embarked on a journey of more than 3000 kilometres and walked to Khartoum, Sudan, where he obtained a visa. People from the Skagit Valley raised enough money to get him over to Washington.

After graduating, he went on to study Political Science at the University of Washington in Seattle, and then read History at St Catherine's College Cambridge here in the UK

He made his home in England, and died in London on 14 October 2012.

Legson Kayira had faith, that is what got him to where he wanted to be. He believed that if God wanted him to study in America, then if he stepped out in faith and followed God's path, all would be well. He wasn't transported like Harry Potter, or Dr Who, he had to make the effort and accept the challenge that God had set before him. Have you ever stepped out in faith to achieve what you believed God had planned for you? I did when I started my evangelism course 15 years ago, I hadn't been to university and hadn't studied since I was at school, more years ago than I'd like to remember. I didn't fully know what was ahead of me, but went through the course and was commissioned in 2008. Gary has certainly stepped out in faith believing that God wants him to be in North Devon to keep alive the 11 churches he is now Team Rector for, a challenge that I believe God has prepared him for.

We say that we want to do God's will. But, instead of seeking the kingdom of God, we seek all sorts of other things. Instead of seeking the "true bread from heaven" we seek fast food. Fast food describes more than an unhealthy way of eating. It describes a culture that worships instant gratification. And this fast food culture sometimes invades the church as well. Instead of seeking God's will, we seek the desires of our heart. In our gospel reading, notice that the people made a subtle change to Scripture. They said that Moses gave the people food in the wilderness. Why did they make that change? They wanted to control Jesus. They wanted Jesus to give them what they wanted. I've noticed that we sometimes do the same thing. It's easier for us to focus on Scripture passages that promise us things, or make us feel comfortable. We can then, sometimes ignore those Scriptures that challenge us. This is especially true of those Scriptures that speak of justice, compassion and peacemaking, or change. We would rather not hear about such things, but it's through the challenges that we grow.

Jesus doesn't want us to have a fast food faith, a faith that gives us what we want now but leaves us wanting, and empty in the future. Jesus wants to give us bread from heaven. Indeed, Jesus is that bread. In him our sins are forgiven. In him we have hope for eternal life. Even the best things in life here on this earth cannot compare with eternity.

In verse 30 & 31, the people wanted Jesus to give them manna. That was the miraculous bread from Heaven that God gave the Children of Israel when they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Manna was amazing bread. But there was a big problem with manna: After a day or two, it got worms and started smelling. You just couldn't eat it.

Now, most of us would say, "We love bread!" -- French bread, white bread, wheat bread, corn bread, potato bread! Rolls or biscuits, home-made or store-bought, we love bread!

There's just one problem with bread. It gets old. Like that sandwich you make, and you are ready to eat. But something interrupts you. And when you come back to it later: Dry as a bone.

Then, there's the sandwich you make. And you are two bites into it, when you look down and see mould. -- Uh!

One woman said the only thing worse than that was seeing her husband go back and make another sandwich with the same bread!

In Jesus Christ we can find a rich, rewarding abundance for our lives, not in the gifts He gives, but in the Giver Himself. Too much of the time we tend to focus on the gifts of God more than the Giver.

A man tells about the time his 3 year old granddaughter went with her dad to meet Grandpa at the airport. He said the very first thing that little girl said to him was this: "I am not supposed to ask you, but, what have you got me."

Church should not be about the gifts. -- It's about the Giver. We need to understand that God wants us to be satisfied in Him. As author John Piper says, "God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him." And Jesus promised that satisfaction, when He said: "He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

As the Bread of Life, Jesus is rewarding for us.

As the Bread of Life, Jesus is God's royal gift for us.

And He is God's reliable gift for us.

Let Jesus be your bread of Life, and hunger and thirst no more.

Amen