

Year B 12th Sunday after Pentecost – Sermon

Sunday August 11, 2024 - Proper 14

Readings

The Proverb:

The First Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8

The Second Reading: Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2

The Gospel: John 6:35, 41-51

Sermon

John 6:34-35

Jesus replied: I am the bread that gives life! No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith in me will ever be thirsty.

It's no accident that King David, the one God promised that the Messiah would come from his family line, **was anointed** in Bethlehem – the house of bread.

Beth – House – Lechem =Bread

Beth – saida – the house of fishermen.

Beth esda – the house of grace

Bethany – The house of figs

Elizabeth – the house of God's promise.

It's no accident that Jesus was born in Bethlehem – the house of bread.

It's no accident that we all know something about bread.

My first job was as an apprentice Baker – obviously my job was to make bread – (pies and pasties and cakes) but mainly bread.

You know how it goes – the three main ingredients – flour, yeast, and water.

On their own they are just flour, yeast and water.

But the very moment you mix the three you have the beginnings of life.

The very moment they are mixed you see the bubbles forming, then the binding, then the rising.

The very moment the three are mixed a new life is formed and the dough starts to grow – bigger and bigger and bigger.

It is a new living thing.

Then what?

You bake it.

And all that life and growth stops.

It's as if the life in the dough is suspended – put on hold.

The baked bread can be shelved, boxed, trucked around the country, even frozen.

And it just sits there - the life that was in it is suspended.

And then the good part – you eat the bread!

The very moment it is eaten – that life that is inside is released – and it feeds your body.

When I was a school kid – mum would send me to the bakery – the one where I eventually did my apprenticeship – to get a loaf of bread.

23 cents! I used to think wow 1 cent per slice because there were 23 slices.

The bread was still warm when I bought it – by the time I got home there were sometimes only 9 or 10 slices left.

There is nothing like fresh baked bread.

Now we have Sour Dough bread – aren't we are spoiled rotten?

Warm sourdough, a bit cheese and wurst – can't beat it.

My mother-in-law – would have pumpernickel bread - so full of flavour and so heavy – one slice is enough.

Jesus said I am the bread of life.

I can't help thinking that the life in Jesus – the bread – is only released when we receive him – in fact when we eat him.

Take and eat – this is my Body!

Many people cannot stomach those words – **take and eat this is my body – take and drink this is my blood.**

The early Christians were persecuted by the Romans accused of cannibalism.

We teach the bread is Jesus body and the wine is Jesus blood.

It is confronting – body and blood – eat and drink.

Like the disciples said to Jesus – **“This is a hard teaching – who is going to believe it”**.

You know, for many traditional cultures this is not such a hard teaching.

It's all about words.

For example in Eastern Papua New Guinea, the word for mothers' milk and blood is the same word – Mia – and Mai means life.

The baby cries for the mother's life.

The crash victim receives a life transfusion.

Blood and Milk equal life – Mia – the same word.

So, they don't hear drink this blood of Jesus – they hear drink this life of Jesus.

I'm sure that would help us – but we don't use their language do we?

That's only linguistics.

Jesus says to us eat my body, drink my blood – in this you will have my life.

Jus like the 23cent loaf of bread it only gave me life when I ate it.

If you are like me – you know very well what happens if you eat more bread than what your body burns up.

We are asked, commissioned, sent; to share the life we receive in the bread of life.

A church community that doesn't share the life it receives becomes fat and stodgy.

We need to use the energy, the life we receive.

You know how it goes – there are those who are desperate for some life-giving bread – and those with too much.

Where are we on that scale?

Is it our job to balance the scales?

Jesus said whoever does not eat his body has no life in them.

Should our goal be that all people have this bread?

Jesus says: This bread is my flesh, and I will give it for the life of the world.'

There is the key to mission and outreach – The bread Jesus gives us - is for the life of the world.

He feeds us so that we feed the world.

He blesses us so we bless the world.

Why does he privilege us so much – that we are the way he reaches others?

It would be so much easier if he just came it people in the middle of the night and blessed them and made them believers.

But he chooses to use you and me.

Many congregations have worship wars – worship this way or that – sing this hymn or that song.

Paul tells us that true and proper worship is when we offer our blessed, nourished, bodies and all they do to, the be God's blessing in the world.

Romans 12:

“Show mercy with cheerfulness. . . . Let love be genuine. . . . Give to the saints. . . . Bless those who persecute you. . . . Weep with those who weep. . . . look for and be with the lowly. . . . Repay no one evil for evil. . . . Don't seek revenge. . . . If your enemy is hungry feed them.” Build your lives on mercy and become merciful.

This true and proper worship – this is the true and proper response to being fed and nourished with the bread and life of Jesus.

True and proper worship is not found on page 6 of your hymn book.

True and proper worship is found on page 1799 in my bible – Romans 12.

True and proper worship is found when you burn off a bit of that energy you receive in here – out there.

Your highest act of worship – is when you give to the one who least expects it and least deserves it.

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!

Let every act of your living, nourished body, in be an act of worship that serves the least first.

Let every act of your living, nourished body, honour Jesus.

Let every act of your living, nourished body, be a death to all that dishonours Jesus.

On the beach that day Jesus said:

I am the bread of life!

What did the disciples say?

Jesus this is a hard teaching – who's going to believe it?

What did the people say?

Lord, give us this bread – always. Amen.

Holy Spirit carry us into this community with the life of Jesus – let us be your blessing to all people. Amen.