

Worship Outline including Reflection for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity
Opening Verse of Scripture John 6.51

'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.'

Collect: Prayer for the Day

God of glory, the end of our searching, help us to lay aside all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom, and to give all that we have to gain the pearl beyond all price, through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

First Reading: 1 Kings 19.4-8

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4.25-5.2

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading: John 6.35, 41-51

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.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come

down from heaven”?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 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.’

Reflection

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’”

In the Holy Gospel reading, Jesus is talking again about nourishment, but this time the provisions are for a very long journey: eternal life. The people listening cannot comprehend this. They argue among themselves, ridiculing his silly offer of miraculous food. They "murmur" that they knew his parents, which made him just a local boy getting above himself. Jesus ordered them to stop complaining and listen. He made the same comparison that we saw last week, between manna that came down from heaven in the desert and Himself, "the living bread that came down from heaven."

Jesus as living bread can be a difficult concept to understand. But leave that aside for a moment and just concentrate on the deliberate kindness God shows to his people: feeding them, giving them drink, pursuing them again and again in order to offer the greatest gift of all, God’s sacrificial love for us. God follows us quietly, gently. How can and should we respond? Receiving the living bread in Communion is a beginning. Reflecting on the mellowness of God is another. And simply slowing down. Stop running away and let the Lord find you.

God’s kind-hearted and also tough love is quite worth the struggle. God is the one who will send us into the world (if he can catch us!). Here is how Paul puts it in the Second Reading. "Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma."

The “I am” sayings of Jesus run throughout John’s Gospel. When Jesus comes walking across the water to the disciples in the boat during the storm after feeding the 5000, He simply said to them, “Fear not, I am.” The central message of the passage is how the apostles took Him into their boat as He came toward them. Jesus is presented as offering Himself as human and divine and His loving

desire for all men and women to take him into the boats of their passages and journeys.

The past deeds of God are being continued in Jesus who came that we may have life and life is this: believing that He was and is sent into the world. Elijah, in our Old Testament reading, wanted to give it all up and the apostles also were being swamped with fear in the boat. Most of us have been there and have been tempted to give up as well. But God so often sends angels to “touch” us, to give us the “Bread from Heaven” and continues to urge us “get up and eat” and then get up and get on with living. Our comfort is more than bread, it is that we have taken Christ into our boats, allowed Him to sweep us from underneath the “broom tree” and keep us as His real presence in the society in which we live. Elijah moaned, “This is enough, O Lord! Take my life,” Jesus says to us, “I am enough! You take my life, eat it all, live it all and you will be already living the eternal life I came and come to share.” Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all mercy, we your faithful people have celebrated that one true sacrifice which takes away our sins and brings pardon and peace: by our communion keep us firm on the foundation of the gospel and preserve us from all sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.