

St Marc Grenoble
Sunday 8th August 2021
1 Kings 19: 3 - 9
John 6: 35,41 - 51
'Living Bread'

Good Morning. Welcome to everyone, both here in church, and on Zoom
PRAY

How do people know who you are? How do you identify yourself?
I know that for some of us, these are very sensitive and difficult questions.

When I worked for a bank, some years ago now, I had to visit a lot of different branches all over the UK, where local staff didn't know me - so I had an ID card, with my picture on; it was also a swipe card, which allowed me into my office and other places I visited more often. (I had something similar when I was a Police chaplain - so that I could visit any police office in our force without difficulty)

In my second curacy, in Liverpool, the Vicar decided I should spend a few days working in a local newsagent's shop (tabac); so that I could get to know the ways of local people. The idea was nobody knew who I was, unless they were told, so that the fact that I am cleric didn't affect our conversations!

Looking back, it was very funny. Some people thought I was the police – or the social security, doing undercover surveillance. Someone else thought I was buying the business!

So, what does all that have to do with today's Gospel?

You may notice John's Gospel is quite different to the other Gospels; many of the stories of Jesus we find in the other Gospels are not included in John.

There are lots of different layers in John's story of Jesus' life on earth; but his main aim was to show the Judean people of his day, exactly who Jesus is.

John wanted to prove Jesus's identity beyond doubt; and establish who He is.

Today's reading continues the stories we've heard over the last few Sundays.

First, through the feeding of the five thousand which gave thousands of people the chance to identify who Jesus really is, by the miracle they couldn't possibly ignore - because it fed their hungry bellies.

Then, walking on the Sea of Galilee, which should've proved beyond doubt who Jesus is, because only God has dominion over the wind and the waves.

But many people still doubted ...

In today's first verse, Jesus affirms, "I am the bread of life. Anyone who comes to me will never be hungry! Anyone who believes in me will never be thirsty!"

These words were chosen to catch the attention of people who, just like their ancestors in the wilderness, knew what it was to be hungry and thirsty; many of those listening had been away from their homes, following Jesus, for days.

This is the first of seven 'I am' statements of Jesus in John's gospel.

Key statements of his Godly identity:

I wonder if you know what they were?

Bread of Life or Living Bread. Light of the world. Gate for the sheep. Good shepherd. The resurrection and the life. The way, the truth and the life. The true vine or the vine.

All of them are assertive 'Godly' statements, which give a very clear and graphic confirmation of Jesus' identity.

What happened next?? Well, ironically, John shows the crowd gave exactly the same response to Jesus as their ancestors had often done to Moses – they started grumbling!

But, a change appears in the context of the story at v. 41 - Let me read it again: The Judeans then grumbled about Him because He had said: "I am the Bread that came down from heaven"

It seems that from previously speaking to the crowds of ordinary people following Him, day by day, Jesus was now speaking to Jewish religious leaders.

It has been suggested that this part of the story took place in a synagogue, which is entirely possible. On the other hand, it is also possible that these Jewish leaders had pushed their way into the crowd, because they'd heard what Jesus was saying and, in their view, it was pure heresy.

Jesus was clearly saying He had come down from heaven, that He's closely related to God – Yet, they knew His earthly family; His parents, they thought, so how could Jesus possibly claim to have come down from heaven?

"Isn't this Joseph's son? We know his father and mother don't we? So how can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

But, Jesus wasn't put off, He made it quite clear for them – His response was "Don't grumble among yourselves".

Then He said a rather surprising thing: "No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them upon the last day. It is written in the prophets 'They shall all be taught by God.'

Everyone who listens to what comes from the Father, and learns from it, comes to me."

I find that really encouraging – you see, it's definitely NOT down to me – or you – to convert people to believe in Jesus; only God can do that.

I / we simply have to do what we've been told; to proclaim the Gospel (by word and example) – God does the rest!

Jesus quotes Isaiah and Jeremiah 'They shall all be taught by God.' Then He says "everyone who listens to what comes from the Father, and learns from it, comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God (that's Jesus!); He has seen the Father.'

In these words Jesus affirms His sole ability and right to bring us into the Father's presence.

You could say, only Jesus has the access code to the Father's (His Father's) presence, which is, of course, the place where we'll spend eternal life!

In the next verse Jesus gives us the heart and core of the Gospel: 'Anyone who believes in me has the life of God's coming age. I am The bread of life.'

'I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats from this bread they will live (in the Father's presence) for ever. And the bread which I shall give is my flesh, given for the life of the world.'

We cannot have better news than that! This is the heart of the Gospel (Good News)

Jesus has made a remarkable statement – a statement, which offers change

“I am the bread of Life. Anyone who comes to me, and trusts me, will never be hungry and will never be thirsty”

Jesus says, quite clearly: “I am the way to eternal life; the only way; but, you need to come to me, and trust me.”

How does that statement affect you? It is immensely challenging.

We have a choice – eat it and live forever; or doubt it and be hungry forever!

The promise belongs to God; the choice is simply and starkly ours!
The question is: **“Which will you choose??”** - You must decide!

Let's pray