

The Bread of Life

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he that comes to me shall never be hungry; and he that believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6v35.

2 men who knew these words to be true are...

William Wilberforce, who freed the slaves in the British Empire; it was said of him, that he was a little, insignificant, ailing man. When he rose to address the house of Commons, the members at first used to smile at this strange little figure; but as the fire and the power came from the man, they used to crowd the benches, whenever he rose to speak. As it was put; “The little minnow became a whale”. His message, his task, the flame of truth and the dynamic of power conquered his physical weakness. The bread of life, filled him with His Spirit, so that he would set others free!

John Knox, preaching in his old age, was a spent old man; he was so weak that he had to be half lifted up into the pulpit steps and left supporting himself on the small lectern but when he began to preach, the bread of life, filled him with power, like a breath of wind, they said, that he would knock the pulpit into splinters! And leap out of it. The bread of life, filled the man with a kind of supernatural strength.

John Knox was filled with Christ's presence, even to his dying day.

Jesus said, I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry or thirsty.

In our passage, read for us by David and Beth McAlister this morning; we discover Jesus connected his words to human need. He was a master at speaking into our human dilemmas.

To the woman, searching for water at the well, he offers life giving water; to the blind man, he offers the opportunity, not just to see physically but spiritually; to the paralysed, he gives him more than mobility, he gives him freedom to live a new life, forgiven and restored in his community and to the hungry disciples, he not only demonstrates how he can feed 5000 from one wee boy's offering but he was speaking of something far more deeper than human food, he was speaking into the souls of all who listened.

That he claimed to be the bread of life and in him they would find fulfillment and peace for their souls.

He was drawing them back to the Old Testament image of the hungry starving people in the desert and ask God fed them daily with manna from heaven; so God has come again to fill their hearts with the same manna from heaven!

At this moment, in our history, many will feel like the wandering Israelites going through the desert; many will feel like the hungry crowd, listening to Jesus' words.

People are genuinely searching for meaning and purpose in life. They always are but this crisis, is making people sit up and take stock, of where we are and where we are going.

When its over some will turn back and go back to their old ways but for some this is a genuine opportunity to do something new, exciting and fresh.

This is an opportunity for people to really think deeper about Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life" for deep down there is a human hunger - a hunger of the soul and we are looking for ways to feed our souls.

The internet will tell its own story; Many are looking at positive thinking and motivational speeches and quotes, hoping that they will somehow sustain them and they may be a sort term help but what if the answer is far nearer home than we could imagine. What if the answer lies right here in this story and Jesus' words today, I am the bread of life, comes to life and brings a new meaning and we hear afresh today, whoever comes to me will never hunger.

Frank Baum, wrote the Wizard of Oz and in 1900, it was first published selling 90,000 books. He wrote it simply to make money for his family and to entertain children and yet in this old story lies spiritual truths.

His main characters, are all searching for something fulfilling in life. The scarecrow is seeking brains, knowledge, wisdom. He feels foolish and inadequate and yet throughout the book, he actually has brains, his thinking helped the little team as they journeyed to OZ.

The tinman wanted a heart, he felt that he could love, if he had a heart and yet all the time, he had a heart; on the journey, he shows compassion – even for the smallest animal and when he cried, his joints seized up.

The lion wanted courage, he felt that he was lacking in this department; that he was easily afraid and yet throughout their journey to OZ, he showed courage and helped the team.

Dorothy wanted home to Kansas and all the time she was home.

It's a great little book, that I've reread again and there are many differences from the film, and since 1900, people have all connected with it because deep down in us all, we are searching for the very basic things of life - wisdom; love; courage and for a connection with our roots. This is the story of mankind.

Jesus knew all about man's searching for meaning and so He came, into this world, to tell us that we can experience fullness of life by following him. By coming to Him, we are connecting with the source of life – the bread of life which we need for daily survival.

Perhaps, we need to discover within us, that we already have wisdom, we have love; we have courage; we are at home and when we come to Christ, all these things are given to us in fullness. I have come to give you life and life in all its fullness, said Jesus!

All we need to do is to have the confidence and courage, to step out in faith and embrace the fullness of life that Jesus promises to those who follow him.

I started with speaking about Wilberforce and Knox for these two men exemplify the change that God can make in our lives when we are filled with his presence and strength.

What God can do in us is amazing. I've seen it, countless times, God working in the lives of those who are open to being fed with the bread of life.

So how do we receive this fullness of life and this inner strength and peace?

Let us come now to focus upon Christ because his body became for us the broken bread which sustains our souls and his blood became the river of wine that cleanses our sin.

If you want to pause your recording, you can do so and go and get a little bread and a little wine or juice and come back and we'll share a simple communion together...to remember the bread of life given for us freely or you can simply watch me and so join with me in a spiritual way.