

The Bread of Life Brings Peace – John 6 v43-59

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life”, quite a statement to make!

We continue our journey in John's gospel and our reading today again reflects on this great teaching of Jesus, “I am the bread of life”.

Oh, when I'm hungry, I can be so grumpy. Not that I'm hungry often!

Hunger can do this to us.

The people in the desert in Moses' time were hungry, they grumbled and they argued and God gave them Manna from Heaven, and Manna satisfied them.

Jesus has taught us to pray, “give us our daily bread” – enough for each day, enough to keep hunger at bay, enough to keep us content.

The people of God are a hungry people; they are spiritually hungry, and Jesus comes, and he offers us the bread of life, which satisfies our spiritual hunger in three ways;

1. The bread of life brings us with peace with God
2. The bread of life brings us the peace of God
3. The bread of life brings us peace with each other.

On the communion table is bread, representing the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. His body broken for us; later we will break bread as a symbol of what Christ has done for us. The breaking and sharing of bread is of paramount importance for it reminds us of Jesus' body broken and shared.

Firstly, the bread of life broken for us, and so it brings us peace with God.

The Bible clearly teaches us that mankind has a problem, and the problem is spiritual, it is deep in our souls, and the problem is a lack of peace in our hearts.

That lack of peace is because we have wandered off and got lost; that's the context to the biblical story; we chose our own path, done our own thing, gone our own way. That's the picture Jesus gives in his great parables, in Luke's gospel; the lost coin, lost sheep and lost son, Lost! That is the diagnosis from the Bible about our human condition.

This condition causes tension in our mind and fatigue in our body as St Augustine wisely wrote “For you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you”.

St. Augustine's famous prayer resonates with the very essence of our existence. He reminds us that God crafted us for a higher purpose, destined to seek fulfillment beyond the confines of this world. Ever restless, our hearts yearn for a deeper connection—a divine rest only found in our spiritual journey with Jesus. Augustine's words serve as a guiding light, urging us to seek meaning and purpose, that we will only find true and everlasting rest and peace in our Creator's love.

Rick Warren, is an international speaker, and author of many books; his international best seller is *The Purpose Driven Life*, he writes, "The symptoms of being at war with God are easy to spot; irritability, a quick temper, insecurity, impatience, manipulation, arrogance, and boasting, holding grudges, and many other attitudes and habits that the Bible calls the "works of the flesh".

In May of this year, I was having my gall bladder removed – I was first in the queue that morning, and I had a top surgeon; at the end of their working day, the surgeon came to see me, and he said that I had a gangrenous gall bladder – badly infected – it had to be removed.

It had to be removed!

That's the picture that the Bible gives of sin. Sin is also like a disease, it infects us and we need a top surgeon to remove it and of course we have one – the one who calls himself, the Bread of Life, who came to remove our sin and cleanse us through his blood shed on the cross. This is what today is all about.

The effects of being reconciled to God – being at peace with Him – are all the qualities that we should aspire to as Christians, the Bible calls these "the fruits of the spirit", love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The good news of the Christian faith, is that God has come to make peace with us. He has come to offer us the hand of friendship, to remove all that is sinful within us, and to welcome us into his kingdom.

So how do we receive this peace?

By surrendering our lives into God's loving hands. To realise that we cannot do it all on our own strength, that the missing part of the jigsaw is God's love and mercy.

So, Jesus comes to us as the bread of life and he offers us peace with his Father in Heaven.

The Bread of Life brings us the peace of God.

Once you make peace with God, you begin to know the peace of God in your heart and mind. The Bible promises, “You Lord, give true peace to those who depend on you, because they trust you” – Isaiah 26 v3

There are many things in this world that rob us of peace: Illness, bereavement, financial worry, family concerns, employment, injustice and the list can go on.

We try and respond to these issues in different ways, we might try harder to control things. Jesus faced many challenges in his life, and yet he remained in perfect peace; in the height of his greatest struggle, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was able to control his fears, as he said, “Not my will but yours be done” and this is where we discover true peace, when we are able to say to God, “Not my will but yours be done”, and at that moment, when we truly mean it, the peace of God comes into our lives.

Reinhold Niebuhr, German pastor, and outstanding theologian, wrote the Serenity Prayer, in 1943, an appeal for grace, courage and wisdom that's become a mantra of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and appealed to people around the world searching for peace. Reinhold Niebuhr, caught the spirit of his day, in the midst of World War II, and he wrote,

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

Jesus also made this promise, ²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Once you’ve made peace with God, and you begin to experience the peace of God in your heart, you will want to share this peace with all the people in your life.

The Bread of Life brings us peace with each other

He does this by turning us into peacemakers. When you receive the Bread of Life and take it into your soul; I'm not merely talking of this physical bread, I'm talking about Jesus, then Jesus becomes part of you, and so you begin to live with him and for him. Jesus gives you the desire to become a man or woman of peace.

When the peace of Jesus comes into your life, one of the main areas of difference is in your relationships with other people. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peace makers they will be called children of God”.

Notice that Jesus didn't say, blessed are the peace lovers, no, he said, “blessed are the peace makers”. There is a big difference between being a peace-lover and a peace-maker.

Peace-making, is not about giving in to someone and allowing others to get their way, that's passivity; we are not called to be doormats for others to walk over us and trample us into the ground. To work for peace, means that we actively work to end conflicts. We take the initiative, and we offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us or seek forgiveness for those we have hurt. Its powerful! Its transformational! It's Christ like!

Jesus said, “if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins”. Strong words but true!

Because if we are not forgiving others, then we have not been forgiven ourselves, as Jesus pointed out in the parable of the man who was released from his debt of millions of pounds, and then immediately when he was released, he goes chasing another man who owed him a small debt, and showed him no mercy. He didn't understand the meaning of grace.

God expects us to forgive others, and not let bitterness develop within our souls, which becomes a poison. He calls us to difficult tasks of reconciling

people; when we don't forgive them, it hurts us more than the other person; the best remedy to deal with hurt, is to let go and let God into your life and allow him to transform those dark moments of your life.

Who do you need to make peace with? Who do you need to share the bread of Jesus with? You may be thinking, I can never forgive that so and so. The memories are too painful, and the hurt too deep. I can't just let it go. The only way to release this is by receiving the bread of life into our lives – to let Jesus be our Saviour, to let him fill our lives with his grace and mercy, so that we can be like him, and offer forgiveness and grace to others, and at that point we become a peace maker.

Remember his words from the Cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!"

Amen and thanks be to God.