

John 6:24-35

I am the bread of Life - Part 1

John's material on the 'Bread of Life' follows-on from the story of the feeding of 5000 with 5 loaves.

In that story, the reaction of the people when they saw what happened, began to say "This is indeed the prophet who is come into the world"

Now we have another reading about bread, with Jesus and the people discussing the meaning of the feeding. In fact, it is John's way of explaining the real meaning, the theology, behind the story of the feeding miracle. As Jesus explains it to the crowd, John is explaining it to his readers.

How often have we seen this? - Jesus speaking on one level, trying to find the words, the examples the parables to explain to his listeners the meaning of the kingdom of God, while those who are listening hear only the words, the superficial meaning. Jesus explained to his disciples that he used parables because the crowds weren't able to grasp the meaning of his words. At one point he even told his own disciples that they weren't ready to hear the full straight truth.

Now the crowd whom he fed have followed him. Apparently, to them, the feeding itself was the message, and they compare yesterday's lunch to the manna provided to the Jewish people in the wilderness after the exodus. They see Jesus as the new Moses, providing them with bread from God.

Which brings us to the heart of today's gospel reading: Yes, in both cases you have been provided with bread from God, but there is a big difference. What you get through Moses is just food to sustain daily life - satisfies the tummy but not the soul - it is perishable, feeding only the body. The bread which God provides through Jesus Christ gives everlasting life. This is the true bread, the life of the world, the word of God, the real gift from God.

The meaning in the gospel according to John of the story of the feeding of the 5000, as explained to us in today's gospel reading, is that only through faith in Jesus Christ does God truly feed us the food we require for everlasting life, the true bread of life. [29]

The crowd is looking for rational evidence, proof of Jesus claims [30]. So, if you are not going to delivering manna every day, what have you got to show us? "What do you mean came down from heaven? - Jesus family is from Nazareth" Why should we believe you?

Jesus is never pointing to himself, but always to God. Jesus is the sign, the message, the revelation of God. He is the messenger, but God is his message.

The crowd can understand a free lunch, and they will follow for that, but Jesus is trying to tell them something different. He says that the Father sent him, that he is the only way to the Father. Those who ate the manna in the wilderness still died, but those who eat the bread fo heaven will not die - those who believe will have eternal life.

[6:32-33]

And then they said to him "[34b]"

At this point, as I was preparing this material, I wrote down a series of questions - I intended them for my own reflection as I wrote, but perhaps I'll share them with you:

> Do they get it ? Do the crowd understand Jesus message, even after the explanation? - No, I don't think so.

They are asking to be given this bread always, but don't understand what Jesus is offering them.

> What are they asking for? - Sounds good - free lunch every day!

> Are they asking for the right things? -for what they really need?

> Do they know what they really need?

> Do we know what we really need?

> Do we know what we don't know.?

John seems to enjoy working with symbolism in his gospel - perhaps for the same reason that Jesus used parables - symbols can say so much more than words - once we can see their meaning. John is not trying to say that we don't need our daily food, but [27] - we should be striving for more than just what we need to get by from day to day, for the food of life, not just a free lunch.

God gives us all that we need for eternal life - makes it available, but doesn't force it on us.

Because we can't understand what that is that we really need- we are not ready for the whole naked truth either.

If we don't understand meaning of the bread of life beyond tomorrow's lunch, we don't really know what to ask for.

That is why we have Jesus Christ - to bring us this bread of life from God - it is through Christ, the revelation, the incarnation of God, that God makes available to us what we really need.. We can't know God's mind, so it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that God can feed us. - and God makes it available to all who have that faith. [35].