



## GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus said, I am the bread of life

St John 6. 24-35

Sunday 4 August

Jesus' statement is on the seven 'I am' statements he makes as recorded in St John's gospel. They are scattered throughout 8 chapters, and 'I am the bread of life' is the first recorded saying of Jesus. Jesus has just fed a huge number of people with just five barley loaves and two small fish. He has satisfied the crowd's physical hunger, and escaped when they wanted to make him their earthly leader. The crowds, or at least some of them, were persistent, and seeing that Jesus had left, went in search of him, eventually finding him on the other side of the lake.

Jesus confronts them with the truth. They weren't interested in him except for the fact that he had fed them. He tells them that they shouldn't just be concerned for their stomachs, but also for their souls. It is he, Jesus, alone, that can satisfy their spiritual hunger. This challenged them, they wondered what demands God would make of them in order that they might be fed with spiritual food. Perhaps they were just humouring Jesus. Perhaps they were bewildered. Perhaps they were beginning to understand.

- How persistent are you in the pursuit of Jesus?
- Do you expect still to be in the place where you last encountered him?
- Why do you seek Jesus – to satisfy spiritual or physical need?
- What demands will you accept of God?
- In what ways do you understand what it means to 'perform the works of God'?

The people demanded signs, citing how signs were given to the predecessors, particularly when the children in Israel were making their forty-year journey to the promised land. Then, they were grumbling at Moses about being led away from food and plenty, although also slavery, and accused God of wishing them to starve. So, God provided 'bread from heaven', and meat, but it was Moses who received the credit from them, not God.

The purpose of this feeding was that God provides, both physically and spiritually, but just as did their ancestors, so did Jesus' followers primarily think in physical terms. Jesus makes it quite clear, that it is God who is the provider, and that he gives the means for living. Even today, we sometimes call bread the 'staff of life', and basic food usually includes bread and water – still shamefully beyond the reach of too many in the world today. To come to Jesus, the bread of life, will mean the end of hunger, then end of thirst. By accepting the teachings of Jesus, by accepting him as God's Son, and accepting spiritual food, will mean that all physical needs will be met – not just for individuals but all people.

- How is Jesus 'the bread of life'?
- What was the purpose of Jesus' actions at the Last Supper?
- Does Jesus merely meet individuals' needs or everyone's?
- Can we never be hungry – how?
- Do we recognise and thank God properly for providing life?

'I am the bread of life' was a challenging statement to those who looked on Jesus as a meal ticket in their earthly lives, who only accepted him on a superficial level. It happened at the Sea of Galilee, and it can still happen today – we are more concerned with our physical wellbeing than our spiritual wellbeing.