

## “The Bread of Life” - A Dialogue

for Harvest Festival, Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 22 March 2020

John 6:30-35

[MW20-11]

Jesus said

- I am the bread of life  
I am the living bread which came down from heaven
- Jesus declares that people’s religious needs and human longings are met in him  
the symbol and language of “bread” is more accessible  
graspable, understandable than traditional theological titles and descriptions
- Jesus says: God satisfies people’s hunger  
reflecting on this, I came up with a kind of discussion that goes like this ...

It doesn’t seem right to say ‘God is bread’

*Why not?*

Well, bread just seems so ordinary, and I don’t think God is ordinary.

*You’re saying God is not ordinary? You have a problem with God being in the ordinary?*

Well, no, that’s not what I meant exactly ...

*And anyway, what’s so ordinary about bread?*

Bread is just that. Ordinary. Everyday. Racks of it in the supermarket. Lots of loaves in the bakery. But it’s all bread. Just bread.

*What is bread made from?*

Flour.

*And where do you get the flour from?*

Wheat I guess.

*Right. And wheat comes from a seed, a single grain. Jesus said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” From that single grain many grains of wheat grow. The wheat is threshed and ground and becomes flour that can be used to make bread. But not before something else is added ...*

Ah, you’re talking about yeast.

*Yes indeed. Jesus said: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” A little yeast makes a whole batch of dough rise, and is what gives us bread. So you see, bread is not so ordinary after all! God is bread. God is ordinary and at the same time God is extraordinary.*

I like that. God is bread: the ordinary in the extraordinary! But I'm still not convinced. "Bread" just doesn't seem enough. God is bigger and better than that!

*What is better than bread?*

Surely that depends.

*I don't think it does. Let me put it like this ... sometimes you have toast for breakfast?*

Yes.

*And toast is ...*

Bread. So?

*And if you have a little more time in the morning and fancy something a bit different you might add some milk and egg and make ...*

French toast. Yum. I'm getting hungry now.

*And to make this yummy French toast you have to have ...*

... bread.

*And you can have pizzas with all sorts of simple or extravagant toppings. But to make a pizza you need what?*

A pizza base I guess.

*And that pizza base is dough, which is again?*

Let me guess ... bread?

*Then there are cream buns and doughnuts.*

Bread too?

*Finally, the piece de resistance, a famous bread dessert: 'Bread and Butter Pudding'.*

It seems if there is bread in the house, there's a meal in the house.

*Indeed! So, like I said, what could be better than bread!*

And the theological point from that would be something like: God is basic. God is the basis for life. God is the foundation. You can put all sorts of things on top, but you first have to have the foundation. If you don't have the foundation, you don't have anything.

*That's right. If you don't have God, then no matter what else you have it's impossible to make a meal ...*

... or a life! I think I get it ...

*We are trying to comprehend the infinite God with our finite minds. Metaphors help. Saying 'God is like bread' is not saying all there is to say about God, but it does say something vital.*

It's beginning to make more sense now. Thank you.

*Don't thank me yet. Here's one more thing to wrap your head around. In other cultures they wouldn't say 'God is bread', it wouldn't make sense.*

I'm having enough trouble making sense of bread. What on earth would these other people say?

*In cultures where they don't eat bread like we do, they say things like: 'God is rice'.*

God is rice?

*Oh yes. God is rice. Or God is taro. God is yams. God is potatoes.*

I think I prefer "God is bread".

*I'm sure you do. But in each case God is a "staple" food. A basic. The one thing that all people eat. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, young or old, chief or labourer. In every case every meal would have as its base rice or taro or yams or potato ...*

... or even bread. Yes I think I'm actually getting it now. God is bread.

*God is available to everyone. Everyone can partake.*

Yes. And more than that: if you don't have bread you die. Without God there is no life.

*'God is bread' tells us plain and clear that God is the basis of life. Nourishment for our bodies, our minds and our spirits.*

You can't make a sandwich without bread.

*You can't have life without God ...*

(space)

Jesus said:

I am the Bread of Life.

The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever.

(John 6:35 )