



Ascension News
Church of the Ascension –
The Anglican Church in Hilton, KZN
Diocese of Natal in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa
JANUARY 2022
BREAD



**A message on BREAD shared by
our own Joan Mauck and then a
second from Lyn Warr at All
Saints United Church
Pietermaritzburg**



Joan Mauck **I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE**

Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life. When we think about bread, we think about something warm, comforting and nourishing especially when it is warm and crusty.

Bread has been part of human existence since before agrarian times, it was a way of taking the grains that grew around them and converting them into a substance that was easily digestible and could be taken on a journey.

Jesus compares himself to bread. He sustains life, he sustains spiritual and physical life. We live and move and have our being in him. Like bread he takes the bits and pieces of our lives and knits them together into something meaningful and hopeful. When our lives have meaning and hope they are nourishing and sustaining. So, no matter where we are we always have Jesus the bread of our lives beside us and within us.



He says, “this is my body broken for you” He invites us to join him at his table to drink the wine and to eat the bread that is not only nourishing but also a symbol of life and of love. All invited no

memory of me”. Is he meaning we should break bread and feed others? Does he mean we should have a ritual meal? What is it that we are to do in memory of him?

Perhaps we are to be as hospitable as he was, welcoming all to his table even those who had deep betrayal in their hearts. Welcoming and serving others, making them feel comfortable and at home. Are we able to show the same kind of lavish hospitality that Jesus showed as an act of remembrance of his deep and abiding love?

Perhaps we are to be prepared to be broken just as he was in memory of him. We as the Body of Christ are we willing to be broken so that others might have life? Are we as individuals prepared to be broken for the world, in memory of him, in order that the world may know the profound love of Jesus.

Jesus is the bread of life, and he gave up that life to give us life. When you consider the statement “do this in memory of me” what do YOU think he means?



Lyn Warr: Blessed & Broken

Scripture: Luke 9: 10 - 17

In Luke's gospel, there are three different times when Jesus handled bread. The first was when he fed the five thousand, which is what we will be looking at. The second was the last night He was with the disciples, in Luke 22; during what we now call the last supper, or the Lord's supper. And the third was in Luke 24, after Jesus was raised from the dead, when he shared a meal with the disciples whom he met on the road to Emmaus.

And in all three instances, Luke records the same sequence:

Jesus blessed the bread. Jesus broke the bread. Jesus gave the bread.

So, this morning, we are going to look at what it means to be blessed, broken, and given. Because I really believe that there is a connection between what Jesus did with bread and what Jesus does with us.



Everywhere you go in the world, there is some version of bread. The French have baguettes and croissants; Jewish cultures have matza. There are English Muffins. French toast. You go to Subway, and you can get a sandwich

on Italian bread. Mexico has tortillas. Greece has pita bread. In Malaysia, there's roti. In India, Naan is very common. In Kenya and Rwanda it's ugali. Poland has bagels. And Americans? Well, they have wheat, rye, barley, sprouted grain, multigrain, sourdough, pumpernickel, cornbread, potato bread, gluten-free bread. And oh yeah: white bread.

And you know what? The variety of bread makes it a great metaphor for the church. Can you imagine how dull the world would be if all we had was white bread? How weird would your next pizza be if all you had was white bread?

How bland would Taco Tuesday be if you just folded up a piece of white bread around lettuce and shredded cheese and minced beef and sour cream and salsa.

But if the variety of bread makes it a good metaphor for the church, then the ordinary-ness (is that a word?) or the commonness of bread makes it the perfect metaphor for our lives. If we're honest, most of what we do is ordinary. We get up, go to work, we play, we tinker at hobbies, we work in the yard, we shuttle our kids to school, sports games and play dates. We shop for groceries. For the most part, nothing about our daily lives sets us apart from the people around us. It's just life. Like bread, it's ordinary.

And maybe you're saying, hold up. I get that Jesus is the Bread of Life. In John 6:51 he said, "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven." And I get that God's Word is compared to bread. When Jesus was being tempted by the devil, the devil tried to get Him to turn stones into bread. And Jesus said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on..." What? - on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).



So yeah—Jesus is bread. God's Word is bread. But where do you get that WE are bread? Where do you get that the CHURCH is bread?

We will circle back to those questions. But let's look at our text for this morning. At the beginning of Luke 9, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach and teach and cast out demons and heal diseases. They go off and apparently have great success, but they are also pretty exhausted.

So, let's pick up the story in Luke 9:10-13 - On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place."

But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five



loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men.

We observe several things here. First of all, the disciples needed some nourishment. They needed rest. Another gospel account of this same story says that “so many people were coming and going that they didn’t even have time to eat” (Mark 6:30-31). So, Jesus looks at His disciples and He knows that their souls need feeding.

But secondly, the needs of the people are overwhelming. The disciples were able to heal people, but clearly not everyone was healed, because there were still crowds of people that came to Jesus for healing. They had proclaimed the kingdom of God, just like Jesus told them to do, but Jesus still talked to the multitudes about the kingdom. So, the disciple’s preaching mission wasn’t a once for all, check this box, put a fork in me because I am done kind of thing. Just like bread, no one says, “Oh no, I ate yesterday. I’m good.” We all need DAILY bread.

But third, resources are in short supply. Verse 12 says that they were in “a desolate place.” And after working the crowd to see how much food was there, all they could come up with was five loaves of bread and two fish. So, the impulse to send the people away is not entirely uncompassionate; it is also practical.

If we’re honest, this is how we feel when we see the needs of our friends, family, and neighbours. It can all feel overwhelming. Turn on the news, and we’re bombarded by more tragedies and hardships. Scroll through Facebook, and you see the difficult doctor’s diagnoses or unexpected losses that people you know are dealing with. A simple ‘sad face’ emoji won’t cut it. You may reply and say you’re praying for them, but what can you really do? It’s just too much. Then, we look at our own resources. Fuel prices are up. Giving is down. Our outreaches are inundated with appeals for help. But people keep coming.



So we say, “Send them away, Jesus, so they can get something to eat.” Maybe they should go to the church on the hill. That’s a rich church. They’ve got resources we don’t have on our side of town. Or we say, “God do something,” because we are at a loss for how to respond to such a needy world.

And Jesus says, “You give them something to eat.” Seriously? Lord, weren’t you listening? You can’t give people food when your own pantry is empty, can you? But Jesus won’t let them—or us—off the hook. And I want to show you how Jesus solves all three problems at once—the needs of His disciples for nourishment; the needs of the people for, gosh, everything else, and the scarcity of resources. Let’s see how He did it.



Luke 9:14-17

And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." And they did so, and had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Jesus blessed the bread. Jesus broke the bread. Jesus gave the bread.

And look how everything changed:

- A "desolate place" became a place of abundance.
- A story that began with "not enough" ended with there being more than enough.
- A crowd that came hungry were satisfied.
- And disciples who believed there was no way had their faith restored in the God who makes a way in the desert.

This is what happens when Jesus takes something that we think is just ordinary – bread - and blesses it, breaks it, and gives it.



I think those three words can change the story for you too.

Jesus took bread, blessed it by giving thanks to the Father, broke it, and gave it.

Bread in the hands of Jesus is blessed, broken, and given.

And so it is for you.

Your life, as common and ordinary as bread, in Jesus's hands becomes something more.

In the hands of Jesus, your life becomes blessed.

TAKING BREAD AND WINE.

When attending a service at St Thomas' Church, Rondebosch they used this prayer during the Eucharist



Here at the table, we see most clearly that we are part of the body of Christ. We are no longer divided into people of different ages, different ideas, different backgrounds, and different gifts. Here unique individuals become a single body, made richer for the multitude of gifts shared, here we feast on one bread, and one cup, and become one body in service to the world.



Be gentle when you touch bread;
Let it not lie uncared for –
unwanted,
So often bread is taken for
granted;
There is so much beauty in bread
–
Beauty of the sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil;
Christ often blest it,
Be gentle when you touch bread.

Be loving when you touch wine;
So freely received and joyfully
shared
In the Spirit of Him who cared;
Warm as a flowing river,
Shining and clear as the sun,
Deep as the soil of human toil;
The winds and air caressed it,
Christ often blest it,
Be loving when you touch wine.



Jesus, may all that is you flow into me, may your body and blood be my food and drink. May your passion and death be my strength and life. Jesus, with You by my side enough has been given. May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross. Let me not run from the love you offer but hold me safe from the forces of evil. On each of my dyings shed your life and your love. Keep calling to me until that day comes when, with your saints, I may praise you forever.

When we go into the world we know that we are Your beloved children, we know that each person we meet is beloved by You. Transform the time we spend with those we meet and with whom we interact. Keep us humble, knowing we are blessed by You with talents and gifts to be used as stewards of this world.

Now picking up on those words being blessed by You with talents and gifts to be used. I share with you the sound bite Joan gave us a week back:

JOAN MAUCK

WHAT IS WORSHIP FOR YOU?

Many may see worship as being the time given to singing and to liturgy. Others may see it as the Eucharist.

According to Richard Foster in his book Celebration of Discipline; Worship is any moment when you experience reality in a deeply

profound way. Worship is to touch life and to know the presence of Christ. To worship is to be present to the presence of Christ in the moment. God invites us into a space of worship and worship happens when we respond to that invitation, when we respond to God's overtures of love.

Forms and rituals do not produce worship because worship is about spirit touching spirit. Singing, praying and praising may lead us to being deeply aware of God's presence and therefore to worship but they are not in and of themselves worship. Hence there is no correct form of worship. When spirit touches spirit, the form is irrelevant.

If we want to surrender to God, then worship needs to be a priority in our lives. Surrender can only come after worship. Our actions flow from worship. When we place service and activity as a substitute for worship, they become a form of idolatry.



Corporate worship is the gathering of people in the presence of God, a people who are aware of the presence of God and gathered in holy expectancy. How then do we create holy expectancy? It begins as we intentionally come into God's presence as the Body of Christ. When we come from a pray, a place of daily conversation. When we come from a place of meeting God in solitude, silence, meditation and prayer. When we have learned to discern God's voice from the noise around us, as we come together out of lives lived in God's presence and as we sit together in holy expectancy the atmosphere in the room can change as hearts and minds become still, open and ready. Richard Foster suggests that in order to prepare ourselves for corporate worship we should arrive 10 minutes early spending time in silence and solitude, lifting our hearts in adoration. Contemplating the blessings of being a child of God and inviting God to reveal himself, then lifting those who are going to lead

the service to God in prayer. And as people begin to enter to give specific people to God in prayer. In this way we gather in the unity of the spirit.

We are a community and so we are called to gather together. We are the body of Christ and so we are called together. We read in Hebrews 10: 25- 24. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **Not giving up, meeting together as some are in the habit of doing. But Encouraging one another.**”



We cannot function without the gathering of his body. If you think for a moment... can you live together as a family and not gather? We gather together at mealtimes and at other times. Families that gather together benefit from that gathering. In the same way, the church benefits from gathering, Christians cannot live in isolation. When we come

together things happen that will never happen if we are sitting in isolation. There is a divine reminder of our being part of the same family. And as we gather, we are folded into one by the one who loves us. I had an experience of this when I attended a centring prayer conference in Pretoria.

There were some 200 people present and as this group of people gathered in the church and prayed in silence for 20 minutes, I could feel the palpable presence of God as he was present to 200 people and as they were present to him. That experience cannot be achieved on

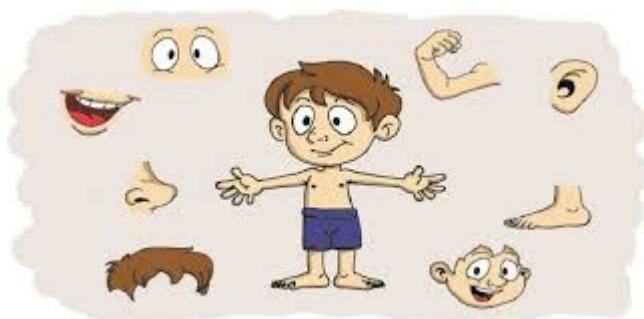


your own. There was a profound feeling of belonging and a profound sense of being loved.

So, I'm going to say this to you. For those of you who are able to come back to church. Come. Come and be part of a community of worship. Come. Come home. Come and be enfolded in the corporate worship. Which is a spiritual discipline given to us for spiritual growth.



Editor: And in response to that I earnestly ask you to respond to the Flash sent out this week. Week after week the same people are doing data projection, arranging flowers, cooking for funeral teas, serving as sacristans and sides people. We need fresh people serving tea. WE are God's church in Hilton. We need you back in church. I am seeing you at the shops, in restaurants but not in the church building. We need our children coming to Sunday School and Youth Group. We are impoverished without you. This Sunday's New Testament reading is from 1 Corinthians 12 on the different parts of the body and **each** being important.



SUNDAY THE 6TH OF FEBRUARY

Dear Parishioners: **Sunday the 6th February is the day Forbes is being instituted as our rector at Ascension.**

Just a bit of information on this:

- **The service will be live streamed at 08h30 on Sunday so if you are not able to come to church you may watch it live.**
- **At the beginning of the week an edited version will go out so if you miss the live stream never fear you will not miss out.**
- **If anyone is able to offer to bring a plate of eats please contact Margie in the office. 033 343 3012**
- **Please Remember Booking is Essential For This Particular Service as there will be visitors.**
- **Anyone who can offer to take temperatures at the door would be most welcome too.**