

Sermon preached by David at St Alban's Church for Harvest Festival 2019

Look at the menu

When did you last visit a restaurant? We don't often go out to eat but last week it was a friend's birthday and we visited a new restaurant in Greenwich overlooking the River Thames. Once we sat down the first thing to do was to **look at the menu**.

These days restaurants have to cater for a **wide variety of tastes**. Some people prefer to eat only *white meat*, others are *vegetarian*. Increasingly today some people choose a *vegan* diet. Others have to eat *gluten free* or *nut free* food for medical reasons. We are all so different but we are united in one thing, **thanksgiving**. Our harvest loaf symbolises bread to feed the body.

Bread to feed the body

Today is our Harvest Thanksgiving and we have a display of different types of food. Whatever diet you choose, **Jesus taught us to give thanks**. When feeding the five thousand we read that he took the loaves of bread, looked up to heaven, blessed them and gave thanks to God. So today and every day it is right to give thanks to God for bread to feed the body.

But in our gospel reading today Jesus warns the people about being concerned only with food for the body. He directs them to **look for bread from heaven** because "life is much more than the food we eat and the clothes we wear" (Matthew 6:25). Life is so much more than the physical. We have minds and souls. Where do we find food for the mind?

Bread of life to renew the mind

Jesus said "People do not live by bread alone but by **every word that comes from the mouth of God**" (Matthew 4:4). The written words of God that we have in this book - the Bible - are "bread from heaven," food which will nourish the mind. The Bible, particularly the New Testament has a lot to say about the mind. It talks about the natural mind, changing our mind and renewing our mind.

The Bible says **the natural mind fights against God** and refuses to submit to his direction (Romans 8:7). It has become the custom in some of our parks to leave some areas "natural". But without cultivation these areas would soon become wild and completely overgrown. In the same way the "natural mind" needs the cultivation of the written word of God.

Jesus began his preaching by saying “Repent.” The Greek word for repent actually means “**Change your mind!**” or “Think differently.” Reading the papers can easily lead us to be “conformed to the ideas of this world” but the words of God written in the Bible help us to change our minds, to think differently and be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:2).

When you look at the menu in a good restaurant there is **something for everyone**. The amazing thing about the Bible is that whatever sort of person you are, whatever your background, wherever you are on life’s journey, there is something relevant to you. Not only that, but each day that we face it is surprising how the Bible has something just right for that particular day.

Bread of life to satisfy the soul

The Christian life is not just about the mind. It involves the soul and the heart. The climax of our gospel today is when Jesus says “I am the bread of life.” The Bible is the written word of God but it leads us to Jesus who is the living word of God. **Our faith really comes alive when it moves 30 cm from the mind to the heart.** Jesus satisfies the deepest needs of human heart.

When Jesus comes into our lives and becomes our daily companion, **he feeds our hearts** with words of comfort, words of encouragement, words of forgiveness, words of hope, words of love, words of healing, words of life. This is why Jesus says “I am the bread of life, **whoever comes to me will never be hungry**, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).

Look at the menu again

In a restaurant have you ever suddenly found that there is more on the menu than you first realised. I hope that is your experience this morning:

- **Our harvest loaf symbolises bread of life to feed the body.**
- **The Bible, the written word of God is bread of life to renew the mind**
- **Jesus, the living word of God is the bread of life to satisfy the soul.**

This is the fully satisfying diet for life. Is it your “daily bread”?



*Break thou the bread of life
Dear Lord to me
As thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea.
Beyond the written word
I seek thee Lord.
My spirit longs for thee
O living word.*

Mary Lathbury 1880