

## Sunday Thought

8th August 2021 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Readings

2 Samuel 18: 5 – 9, 15, 31 – 33

Psalm 130

Ephesians 4: 25 – 5: 2

Mark 6: 35, 41 – 51

### Bread Forever



Jack had agreed to be a member of the Church Council again after many years as just a pew-sitting worshipper. After his first council meeting, he approached me with a wide grin. *'Not like it used to be'* he laughed. *'No-one shouted or walked out and slammed the door behind them.'* I wonder if that is how it was at church meetings in Ephesus?

Paul, in today's reading tell the Christians there how they should live in church – as members of 'the body of Christ.' *'Don't make the Holy Spirit sad,'* he says. *'No bitterness or passion, no long-lasting angry feuds; no shouting, insults, hateful feelings.!!'* Could it have really been that bad?

From the Gospel reading it appears that synagogue leaders had been much the same, especially when the son of a local carpenter set himself up as a Rabbi and preacher, claiming that he was the Messiah. He openly preached that he had come from God, and he had, first-hand, his heavenly Father's words for them. They did not understand or accept his claims. Mark tells us this came to a head after Jesus had fed a huge crowd with small amounts of fish and bread. They had attended one of his *ad-lib* open-air rallies. To the dismay of Pharisees and synagogue leaders he went on to preach, *'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry!'* He further claimed, *'I am the living bread – which, like God's manna, comes down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread they will live for ever!'* Then he said clearly, *'It's me! Whoever comes to **me** believing my words will really have eternal life. It will be like feasting on God.'*

What a good thing there was no local press at the time, although gossip headlines would have travelled faster proclaiming, *'Preacher Messiah claims to have heard God speak to him.'* *'Come and have a feast on God,'* or lower down the Press scale, *'Come and have a nibble of the Messiah.'* Putting it in those words helps to show how little they understood of what he had said and done. Few would understand until after his death and resurrection when he gave us his Holy Spirit.

The problem for these religious leaders was their difficulty, like the crowds, to separate material and spiritual facts. As Jesus told Peter when he tried to persuade him from the way of the Cross, *'You're thinking materially Peter – these are the world's thoughts, not God's thoughts.'* [Mark 8] Jesus was using his distribution of bread as a parable of how the Father wants people to open their lives to his Spirit and thereby come alive with a new, forever-life of love, wisdom and truth. It would be, as he told Pharisee Nicodemus, like a new birth which you cannot put into words or explain any more than you can the experience of your natural birth. It's like the wind. We just feel and accept it – so, believe and 'be blown' by the Spirit of God. We still have problems with literal approaches to our faith in Jesus and like some of those synagogue leaders fail to see that life in God is so much more than our prayers and songs of praise. It is to fully LIVE!

Paul describes this new life in his calmer words to Ephesus as he tells them, *'If you share life in Christ, you are like a new person. You overflow with the love of Jesus. It means holy and upright living, truthfulness, peace, honesty, compassion, forgiveness ... Altogether a life controlled by love.'*

*Jesus, the bread of life* is a wonderful theme. We pray his prayer, *'Give us today our daily bread.'* It asks for his material provision day by day, but also says *'Let more of your life and love be in us now and tomorrow and for ever – heaven always!* It may not be as easy as it sounds. There will always be opposition. Failure to understand this way of God's real life stirred up religious councils and sent Jesus to his Cross, but all who share *'bread forever'* with him would not wish to change that. It's what made *'the life'* possible. The invitation is unchanged. *'Join the world's hungry crowd, sit down, reach up to Jesus, and take him – our forever bread.'*

#### **A Prayer** (based on Psalm 130)

#### **Watching for the dawn**

Lord, I wait eagerly for your help.  
I wait like the night watch for the dawn of a new day.  
Even when I feel in the depths of despair,  
or like the greatest of sinners,  
I know you forgive me:  
I know your love for me is constant and unfailing.  
I wait in awe of you:  
I look to your Cross:  
I trust in your words of promise.  
Lord, I wait eagerly for your help;  
I know you will not fail me, ever.

