

**Bread of Life**  
Pentecost 11 2018  
St. Andrew's Kelowna  
The Rev'd A Privett  
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**I speak with you this morning in the presence of God and the beloved people of God. Amen.**

What does it mean to you to believe?

This morning we receive a Gospel reading with that question at its core. A large crowd, we remember from last week, were fed with more food than they could ask or imagine and now some of them are following Jesus and his disciples trying to figure out who this person is who has fed them to the full. In the Greek, it suggests that they may have been both filled and fulfilled by how he fed them. When it comes to our deepest desires, Jesus is always a straight-shooter and so he looks at the crowd and says to them that they are following him simply because they ate their fill, not because they were fulfilled by something deeper that God is doing in Jesus. It's about what Jesus can do for them, not about who Jesus is. And so he tells them to work for the food that doesn't perish, to do the work that God has set before them which is to that Jesus is the one who God sent, the Messiah, Jesus is God in human form. Because to believe this, he goes on, is to believe that there is that which satisfies all deep hunger, that which quenches all deep thirst. And so they ask for a sign, they say 'prove it', even though they were just fed. And perhaps we can't blame them after Jesus makes such an astounding claim but we can ask of them and of our own requests of God – will what we ask for just fill rather than fulfill? The sign Jesus has to give them is nothing less than himself. Even more than the bread that fed them, Jesus is the Bread of Life. The very stuff of life is here to nourish them, Divinity has entered time and space and the Life of Eternity is here to fulfill them and bring them into the God's kingdom. All of this is happening at the time of the Passover, the remembrance of when God brought God's people from slavery to freedom and here the very stuff of life is holding before them anew exodus, a new freedom from sin and death, a new deep fulfillment.

And so we stand with that crowd this morning and are asked to really, really think about what it would mean to believe this extraordinary claim that there is something that really, deeply satisfies and quenches our longings, something that frees us on a level far deeper than anything made by humans. Something deeper than human love, more intimate than sex, more satisfying than good food, more enlightening than new experiences. We are asked to believe not in the sense of checking off doctrinal boxes but giving our hearts and minds to this God in human form who will satisfy and free. It was an extraordinary claim then and it is one now,

especially in our culture where consumerism conditions us to never have enough while telling us that self-actualization is possible (if we just do enough yoga, eat enough kale and earn enough money). It's a radical thing to believe that deep contentment and freedom exists beyond ourselves and for something greater than ourselves. To imagine a world where everyone operates from a place of deep freedom in God rather than the fear that so often rules our hearts and politics; a world where we of course still need food and love but we do not try to make them fill things in us that they can't. The preacher David Lose puts it this way: It's hard. "For on a day-to-day basis, most of us have gotten pretty good at defending ourselves from the pain and frustration and hurt and despair of life .... And then these promises of God are announced to us and they only betray the foolishness of our self-reliance and at the same time promise us more than we could have ever hoped for."<sup>1</sup>

More than we could have ever hoped for. In the deepest part of your heart, what do you hope for? To be fully loved? To forgive or be forgiven? To be at peace? To love God fully? We say a prayer together every time we gather for worship called the Collect for Purity that says, "to you all hearts are open, all desires known and from you no secrets are hidden". God knows the deepest desires of our hearts and we come together as this beautiful jumble of hopes and hurts, desires and longings and pray, "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name" – in other words teach us to know the difference between being filled and fulfilled; between the bread of this world and You; that we might know and love you not because of what you can do for us but simply because you are God and in that kind of love begin to see and live anew.

Begin to see in a piece of bread Christ's life for us, in water the transformation from death to life, in wine taste the kingdom of God, in the suffering of our neighbour see the face of Jesus, in our own selves see the life of the Beloved, see all those holy places where filling and fulfilling come together and say: yes, we believe in this kind of God and this kind of world and this kind of freedom. Give us this bread always and make us worthy, Lord Jesus, of this astoundingly beautiful calling.

Amen

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/07/pentecost-10-b-the-surprise-of-our-lives/>