9th Sunday after Trinity (Year B)

'Bread of Life'

My car is essential for getting me around to many places that would be difficult to reach by any other means. Regular checks & servicing help to keep the car running well, by keeping all the metal bits of the engine and the gearbox running smoothly

Years ago there was a TV advert for Castrol oil that began by comparing healthy foods such as salad and fruit, with rather stodgy or fat food, with the caption 'you are what you eat' as the pictures drifted from the body to a car.

'You are what you eat.' Eat junk, you look and feel like junk. You poison your body with artificial stuff, or overdo alcohol or drugs, your body, and your mind, break down.

Paul says the same about the spiritual life. He exhorts the people of God to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Worthy! None of us can be completely worthy, only the Lord himself is worthy but we have a promise that those who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life. If we say that we believe, it should be in our hearts to live for him. We should be completely humble and gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. Within that love, each has a job to do so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Why then, is it so hard? I thank God for all those of this parish who get involved in the activities of the church and community, in whatever way. But it isn't always like that. Sometimes it is so difficult for people to work for God. Similarly, there are so many differences between and within churches. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we should be in unity, be patient, bearing with one another in love.

I recall a Church Times article asking, 'How do you judge the success of a church?' Is it a matter of packed pews or giving? What does God want from us? The writer, Rev Dr Adrian Hough, pointed out that we live in an age in which success is defined principally in terms of financial gain and numerical growth. He quoted Dietrich Bonhoeffer who criticised worldly criteria of success. He goes on to say that glorifying God through worship, and being a blessing in the world, are what we about. On the way, we might discover that we are seeking the Kingdom of God.

To live that worthy life in Christ, we must be healthy. 'You are what you eat.' You are also what you read, how you behave, what you do to others, what you say, what you take in by whatever means. Neither an unhealthy spirit, nor an unhealthy body, nor an unhealthy lifestyle, can live a healthy life to the glory of God. So, brothers and sisters in Christ, "How are you with God? How are you feeding yourself? Or how is someone else feeding you? Good food or junk? "

What do we understand from Scriptures? How do we interpret them? Are we like the crowd that followed Jesus? He had to correct their interpretation of the Scripture. He who gave them the true

bread was not Moses but *my Father,* and the giving of the true bread was not past (*has given)* but present *(gives).* The claims implied here are astonishing. He is not claiming to be a giver of bread like Moses, but focuses on the real giver, God. He identifies God as 'my father', making himself and his relationship with God the defining expression of God. What an enormous claim, followed up by a focus on right now: his Father is giving them bread which is the 'true bread from heaven'. The real bread that is the source and standard of all else can be called 'the bread from heaven.'

He then corrects thinking about Moses and the bread as he explains that this bread of God *gives life to the world.* God is not just concerned about Israel, but for the whole world. And the need is not just for sustenance, but for life itself.
The world, apart from God, is dead. Our need is for a new birth for apart from Christ we have no real life.

Adrian Hough tells about presenting an 11year old with Jesus' statement that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven we must become as little children. He asks her, 'What have children got that is so important, but which adults have left behind and forgotten?' A pause, then she replies, 'Adults have forgotten how to play.'

Success is not attaining financial or numerical goal. It is simply being able to play in the presence of God. The play of children is spontaneous and creative; it follows a pattern; it is done to a purpose. Adults who think they are playing are usually just following a set of rules. Jesus is saying that adults find it difficult to enter his Kingdom because they have forgotten how to live their lives in a joyful and spontaneous pattern of creativity.

A successful church allows and encourages its members to play with freedom, to worship with joy, to glorify God in whose image we are made, and to be a blessing to the world in which they live. Such a church can only be like that when the members are united in Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows, and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

How is each part to be able to do its work? Simple!

'You are what you eat'

To live a life worthy of the calling you have received, you need to come to our Lord Jesus Christ and feed on him for he/she who comes to him will never go hungry and he who believes in him will never thirst. People of God, may you be in Christ and be blesses in all that you do and all that you are.

Rev Brian Griffiths
1st August 2021