

Last birthday gift you've ever received and best birthday gift you've ever received.

One of the best birthday gifts I ever received was a bread making day. Sent off on my own, I was taught to bake 5 different types of bread and literally baked ALL DAY. I brought home some 15 loaves of bread. There was an abundance and we had to freeze it in the end because it was simply too much and would've gone stale.

I never make much bread anymore because of the time it takes. Measuring, mixing, kneading, proving, knocking back, kneading, proving and then baking...I find it hard to actually make the stuff. It's a luxury. Given the time taken, it's simply cheaper to buy fresh beautiful bread from the supermarket. But we know, we know this is modern. Super modern. In the ancient world, baking bread was a daily task. No freezers and warm weather meant it would spoil quickly.

It looked a bit like this – sometimes like a cob roll that you and I would eat with soup, sometimes like a flat bread- unleavened bread – that's a bit like a pitta bread. They'd have ovens in the ground and there would be bits of grit in the dough. It was a daily task and if you didn't make it you'd be hungry. Obviously the rich would have servants or slaves but you knew the reality of daily bread. It wasn't a hobby, it was hunger.

Teach us how to pray, say the disciples:

'Give us this day our daily bread'.

We kind of puzzle over it. What does daily bread mean? Ancient world. It meant actual real bread. Food. Sustenance, bread meant life, it meant labour and time. It meant family and food. Nowadays lot's of people avoid bread as some kind of diet but for the ancient, the word 'bread' is often just used for 'food'.

Bread is this massive image all through the bible – even in Genesis – preparing food is a way of making people feel at home – in Exodus we get the bread from heaven, the manna sustaining the people then in the later law books, bread has a religious-ritual function with the show bread – Elijah is fed by ravens, when Jesus is looking to represent his body broken for them, for us – bread. Bread, bread, bread, bread, bread. BREAD. And what happens with the bible is that you get these images which build the metaphor up and up and up and so we can end up hearing the meaning but losing the original symbol itself. We know this implicitly; we sing songs about it. If you're on a date and your prospective partner turns up in a posh car but says, shall we go to KFC...you may love KFC...you may think it's the best thing but what is the date saying? If the relationship goes well and you have your first Christmas with them and both sets of parents invite you...why is it

stressful? You can't just say, I will receive my allotted 4000 Christmas day calories from either venue, it matters not. Nope. The meal means something. Jesus offers you bread. Daily bread.

St Georges if you take nothing else from this today I want you to hear today is that God cares about your needs. Your actual bodily needs. Jesus, the master one, is telling us to pray about them. How do we pray Jesus? Ask for bread. Your daily bread. What do you need today. Let's take a moment and pray into them.

Look at the sparrows says Jesus, your Father feeds them...Or look at the Lily of the field...Lord give us this day our daily bread, we bring you these needs, our needs.

That whole image of bread can become overwhelming and over the history of the church, we've been guilty of 'spiritualising stuff' so that physical needs get overlooked in comparison to 'spiritual needs'. For example, I've heard a very, very prominent speaker say, 'social action – that's feeding people, clothing and housing people – is fine but what they **really** need is the gospel – otherwise it's like chucking food down the pit'. And what he's worried about is that Christians can do nice things but forget to talk about Jesus – but on the other hand, it's easy for the church to fall into the trap that the book of James describes:

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

When we pray, 'give us this day our daily bread' and know many of us are stuffed to the gills with food – throwing food away because we buy too much - as we pray this – our face is turned towards those hungry people in our community and wider who do not eat. We can actually do stuff here. We will do stuff here. We've got projects starting in September and more in the pipeline.

When I was a chaplain for students, we'd get a lot of people moving out of home for the first time and needing to learn to budget and cook. Or not. We had one guy who bought dominos pizza for like 2 weeks and wondered why he was a bit short; one guy arrived and bought a beautiful guitar but had no money for food for the rest of term...and part of your brain goes...how? How can you get to University and not compute that you can't eat a guitar? Well because they've been kids, never really been hungry – been dependent on parents so far and going to university is learning to be independent...but it wasn't really. Year one, live in halls with subsidised canteen. Year 2, 3 student housing – no one really complains cheap access to stuff – if you fail a paper now, your lecturers feel it looks bad on them and will provide support to coach you back to success...It wasn't truly learning independence, it was learning a different kind of dependence – but one that the students themselves didn't really see.

I don't know how many of you feel like proper grown-ups? When did you start feeling like a grown up? For me it was putting a national trust sticker on the car –

anyway – a grown up is someone who doesn't depend on anyone – free from external support, pull up their own boots and can make it on their own two feet.

But. Jesus doesn't call us grown ups. He calls us 'children'. Jesus doesn't call us to be independent. We are dependent in ways that we don't understand. Right now your bodies have functions in your liver and kidneys that maybe one person in here understands. Our brains are so complicated that after prescribing antidepressants for the last 50 years, one paper suggested we actually don't know how they work....we're walking, talking, thinking balls of meat and bone that are powered by electricity which we generate. That's just our bodies. Our environment is not too hot or too cold to sustain life with clean breathable air. We live in a just country, a safe one, with clean water, fuel and food....Literally none of those things are in my control. Many of you drove here in cars, that you don't understand, have a phone in your pocket that might as well run on magic for all you understand it.

When I was a kid, I thought adults had it all figured out. Now I am a father with 3 kids, married for close to two decades, ordained with degrees and what I'm figuring out, what I learnt, is that I know, I don't know a lot. That the world is so fabulously complex and I am just a part of it. What I have learned, is that I am dependent on God for my daily bread. My every waking moment, my every breath, I depend on God – it's just, I can't see it most of the time. Growing up in the faith, means gradually acknowledging your dependence on God for every part.

Give us this day, our daily bread.

Amen