

The Church's Complaints Department!

Exodus 16^{2-4,9-15}; Psalm 78²³⁻²⁹; Ephesians 4¹⁻¹⁶; John 6²⁴⁻³⁵

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. [John 6³⁵]

Which side of the readings are you on today:

the whole congregation of the Israelites complained
or
lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called?

How easily we become the people who complain - we get the equivalent of the manna in the wilderness of the loaves and fishes when 5000 are fed, but then it isn't quite enough - and we grumble.

What we are having to balance in the readings today is the undoubted generosity of God against the doubtful needs of his people.

In the Gospel Jesus tells us: **I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.**

This doesn't mean that you don't have to go home and prepare your lunch today. In the text eating and drinking are metaphors - the verbs that matter are **come** and **believe**.

- ✦ It is clear that the crowd wanted more dramatic events - Jesus says to them: **very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.** When Jesus says to the crowd, **this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent**, they just don't get it and show this when they said, **what sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you?**
- ✦ The reference back to the Psalm and to Exodus is clear - but there is something important in what God does: **I will test them to see whether they will follow my instructions or not.** The provision was daily (double in preparation for the Sabbath - and we know from the story that some didn't trust God and took more than they needed and that it went

mouldy). The purpose of the miracle (as with all miracles) was **that you shall know that I am the Lord.**

We begin to **live a life worthy of the calling to which you were called** when we **come** to Jesus and **believe** in him.

How is that done?

- ✦ Jesus, in this the first of seven **I am** sayings in John's Gospel, that he is the only one who can satisfy the core hungers within all humans. It isn't like the measles vaccine, taken once to protect you from the real thing. It is as vital to us as food and drink that we live close to him, live for him and believe in him. It is a daily sharing of our life with Christ.
- ✦ Paul gives us some important lists:
 - ✦ We are called to **humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity and peace.**
 - ✦ We are part of **ONE body, spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father.**
 - ✦ We are given gifts of being **apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.**
- ✦ The things that God does and gives lead to **maturity** and **promotes the body's growth.**

All of this leads to a very blunt statement that the people of God need to **grow up!** Looking for signs that serve us rather than serve God, or complaining about our perception of God's failure to do the things that impress us or serve our needs betrays us as less than faithful Christians.

For the people of God to thrive we need to have a much clearer focus on doing and being for the greater glory of God.