



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2024 - TRINITY 11**

COLLECT

O God, you declare your almighty power
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 34 (vv 1-8)

- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times; ♦
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul shall glory in the Lord; ♦
let the humble hear and be glad.
- 3 O magnify the Lord with me; ♦
let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the Lord and he answered me ♦
and delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Look upon him and be radiant ♦
and your faces shall not be ashamed.
- 6 This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me ♦
and saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him ♦
and delivers them.
- 8 O taste and see that the Lord is gracious; ♦
blessed is the one who trusts in him.

A reading from the first book of the Kings, Chapter 19, verses 4 to 8.

Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. *1 Kings 19.4-8*

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from John, chapter 6, verses 24-35.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

I am the bread of life, says the Lord. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 6, verses 35 and 41 - 51.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

John 6.35, 41-51

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

A Reflection from Peter...

So, the food series continues! Yet it goes on being puzzling because it's not just about food. The Gospel reading slips between eating and believing, between life on earth and the life of God. Just as you think you've grasped the point of it all, something new crops up and we find we're back at the beginning of our understanding. But today we're given an episode from the life of the great prophet Elijah to set the context. Elijah has been having a rough time. He has tried to be a faithful witness to God, but has been badly treated as a result and when we catch up with him, he's had enough. He's gone off by himself and he asks God, "Put me out of my misery. Just let me die!" – and then he goes to sleep – only to be woken by an angel with a picnic. This happens not once, but twice, and then the angel sends him on his way. Sleep and food: excellent aids to recovery of equilibrium; things small in themselves that can change the narrative.

Part of Elijah's problem was that the world he had to live in, and the ministry entrusted to him by God didn't seem to fit together. There was a lack of integrity that almost broke him. I once knew someone who was a quite remarkable judge of character. From time to time he would say, "I simply can't listen to what that man says, because of who he is." What he meant, of course, was that he perceived a lack of connection between the 'talk and the walk'; a lack of integrity at the heart of the person. In today's Gospel something similar happens.

We read, "Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They were saying 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?'"

But there is a difference. Those doing the complaining are taking a bit of knowledge they have – that Jesus is the son of Joseph, and they know his mother and father – and drawing conclusions from that, without being willing to admit that the truth may be bigger and better. It's a bit like Donald Trump saying that because he got more votes overall in the 2020 election than the 2016 election he must have won (conveniently overlooking the fact that Joe Biden won even more votes!) – and we hope the same won't happen in 2024! A bit of truth is made to be the whole truth.

We long for a world in which things make sense and we are free from worry and anxiety. It is of such a world that Jesus speaks, 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever...' This bread of life is just the kind of security, joy, peace and hope that we long for. And it is possible because Jesus is not just the son of Mary and Joseph, but the Son of the living God. 'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me,' says Jesus. Jesus, uniquely, is the point of connection between heaven and earth, between God and creation. As scripture tells us, he is the corner-stone. In Harry Potter terms, he is the port-key that enables us to reach our goal. In a world where trust can be so easily eroded and where there are many incentives to act with less than complete integrity, it is a huge reassurance and encouragement to find in Jesus such complete trustworthiness. And just as he encourages us to turn to him and find him as nourishing as the best bread ever, so he encourages us to be food for others, to help others find in him the way to the Father, the way to lasting love and joy – and complete integrity.