

**All Saints' Cottenham with Rampton, Online Evening Prayer on Zoom
6pm Sunday 31 May 2020**

'Give us this day our daily bread.'

Over the last three weeks, Sarah, Cheryl and I have covered the first few lines of the Lord's Prayer. We've looked at the implications of heaven and God as 'Father', the holiness of God and the meaning of God's kingdom and how to do God's will.

Now we're thinking about bread. In the Bible the word translated as 'bread' occurs some 250 times. In Exodus 16 bread 'rains from the heavens' in the desert. The Israelites getting ready to escape from Egypt were told to take unleavened bread with them, not to delay making bread with yeast but be ready to move fast. In Christian terms it has become infused with symbolism. It's a spiritual food: 'the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' and 'the bread that we break...a participation in the body of Christ' in 1 Corinthians at the Lord's Supper. It's one of the great 'I am' declarations of Jesus in the Gospel of John 'I am the bread of life'. So bread has always meant much more than the 30 plus variants I counted in Cottenham Co-op the other day.

Bread is not a basic food in every part of the world. Rice, noodles, cassava, nuts, berries, fish or meat would count as the basic food in Asia, Africa, South America and the Arctic. Bread is a Middle Eastern/European invention. Archaeologists say the significance of bread is that ancient nomadic people started settling and growing cereals. That meant the start of civilisation, i.e. people living and getting organised in villages and towns. The Israelites in the Old Testament longed to get settled, as we've seen in today's Psalms. In the wilderness they longed for bread, so God sent them manna as a substitute, their own 'daily bread' that appeared in the morning.



Bread for the journey is important today. This image is of a famous type of bread I ate along the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage route in 2019. It lasted for days! A basic necessity. But of course, it's not enough in itself and we did eat lots of other things. The real sustenance came from shared prayer, reflection and worship with colleagues in faith. It was a very deep experience of having enough for the day, free to live without anxiety as in the Matthew reading. I was very amused by a story about

the Evangelical Christians at Holy Trinity Brompton, the famous church in London where the Alpha course started. Apparently in the 1970s they would go in a large group for a summer fellowship week to a holiday camp on the Suffolk coast at Pakefield. At that time the chalet accommodation was very basic, a culture shock for HTB people from Kensington. So the Pakefield village shop would completely change its stock for that week to cater for rich Christians nipping out to supplement their diet. No sliced white bread for them.



I think that's very funny, but of course the joke is on me too. I love smoked salmon and avocado too and I buy them at Cottenham Co-op.

However, I know that sharing bread with others as a church means doing something practical. It means making ethical choices about shopping, about making sure others in our community can feed their families.

This is the packing list at Foodbank for a family who are at crisis point, with no spare money to buy food. So thank you for donations.

Item	Tins/packets
Cereal	1 large
Soup (can/packet)	4 standard
Beans/spaghetti in sauce	4 standard
Tomatoes/pasta sauce	4 standard
Vegetables	4 standard
Meat	3 standard
Or Vegetarian	2 standard
Fish	4 standard
Fruit	2 standard
Rice pudding/custard	2 standard
Sponge pudding	1 standard
Biscuits	1 large packet
Sugar	1kg
Pasta/rice/noodles	1.5 kg
Instant Mash	1 packet
Tea or coffee	160 bags/medium jar
Long-life juice	1 litre
Milk UHT	2 litres

Finally, that word 'daily'. Apparently it's an odd Biblical word that was hard to translate and some scholars say that it really should be 'bread for tomorrow'. That makes sense in that bread has to be produced the night before to be ready in the morning, as you can tell if you walk by Barker's bakery in the evening in Broad Lane, Cottenham.

If it is 'bread for tomorrow', it reminds us to live today in faith, in trust that God will provide the basics for the future. It reminds us to live without anxiety and to thank God daily. #

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'We do not complain of what God does not give us; rather we thank God for what he does give us daily'.

Amen.