

Sunday 12th August 2018 Taste and see that the Lord is good!
1 Kings 19:4-8 Psalm 34:1-8 Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2 John 6:35 & 41-51

Taste and see that the Lord is good / gracious

Sounds good to me... to taste and see how good God is

3 out of 4 of our passages today talk about tasting or eating; Elijah eating the bread cakes that an angel provided for him, the Psalmist encouraging us to taste and see that the Lord is gracious and Jesus himself telling all those around him who had ears to hear, that He is the bread of life and whoever eats of Him, the living bread, they will live forever.

So we are going to have a think this morning about what it might mean to taste and see that the Lord is good / gracious; because blessed is the one who trusts in him.

Elijah

First let's look at the Old Testament reading about Elijah. Before we look at the specific passage we need to back up a bit and fill in some of the back story.

Elijah was a prophet to God's chosen people Israel almost 900 years before Christ

Ahab was king at the time and Elijah had been given a message by God to deliver to King Ahab.

But it was a word of warning, severe warning because Ahab had abandoned God's commands.

In fact in 1 Kings 16:30 we read that Ahab had done *'more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any king before him'*. His evil deeds had included marrying Jezebel who was a worshipper of Baal.

Ahab then began to follow suit and in various ways *'did more to provoke the Lords anger than all the kings of Israel before him'*. 1 Kings 16:33

Elijah called Ahab and his prophets to a challenge, a story you may know.

The challenge was to set up an altar with a bull for sacrifice and then pray to their respective gods and see who would hear and answer and produce the fire needed for a sacrifice

Ahab had 450 prophets of Baal and 400 of Asherah. Elijah was on his own

The bulls were prepared and placed on the altars and the prophets that Ahab had summoned called and shouted and asked their pagan gods to produce fire. Nothing happened

Elijah repaired an altar that had been used to worship Yahweh and had the prepared bull placed upon it. He then had 4 large jars of water poured over the sacrifice not just once but 3 times. He then prayed that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would let the people know that Elijah was speaking on behalf of God, that they would know God and see that their hearts were being turned back to God

After his prayer fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice and licked up the water in the trench

The people at once said that The Lord is God and Elijah ordered for all the prophets of Baal to be seized and then slaughtered so that not one of them was left.

And then the rain began to fall - there had been a drought in the land for 3 years

All this was some event and Jezebel was not at all happy that her prophets had been made a mockery of and slaughtered in this way so she went after Elijah and sent word that she would have him slaughtered within 24 hours

Pick up today's reading... Elijah went a days journey into the wilderness and sat down alone, under a solitary broom tree.

And how was Elijah feeling? Elated and jubilant that evil was defeated and God was recognised as the all powerful God? Excited at seeing God's mighty hand at work?

No! He was tired and dejected and wanted to curl up under a tree and die

He had had enough and wanted out. He said "It's enough. Take away my life!"

We even read that he sat down under a solitary broom tree. I don't know about you but you don't often see a broom tree on its own. But he had gone to the wilderness, found a solitary tree and sat under it exhausted, discouraged, dejected, at the end of his energy and resources. Afraid of Jezebel

Have you ever felt like that? Do you feel like that today? Just that everything has become too much and you just want 'out'!

Elijah sat under the tree and fell asleep. Wishing it was all over and his tough job was over. In fact wishing that his life would end.

But he was not alone. God was there with him, heard his words, saw his heart and sent an angel to give him food and water - a cake of bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water

Elijah lay down and slept until an angel touched him and told him to get up and eat. And then after eating and drinking and presumably a bit more sleep, then the angel of the Lord touched him a second time and told him to get up and eat because he had a journey to make!

A journey to Horeb (Mount Sinai) that would take 40 days and nights (about 200 miles)

Elijah was tired, exhausted, weary, and wanted to get out but God was there, provided for his needs and took him on to a new place.

God provides for us when our resources are exhausted and run out. Sometimes we have to come to the end of our own resources before we let go and let God. We can be good at keeping on keeping on and God wants us to let go and let Him. Elijah had taken incredible steps for God and God was there to restore and refresh Elijah.

Taste and see that the Lord is good / gracious / compassionate wrote David in our Psalm

Look at what Jesus said to the crowds several hundred years after both Elijah and David... those words that we heard at the end of last week's Gospel reading and again today

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

The crowds were grumbling. 5000+ of them had not long before been fed by Jesus in a miraculous way. The disciples had just seen him walk on water. But they wanted more proof of who exactly He was and are here grumbling at him

And Jesus gives a simple reply for a profound truth

'Whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.' vs 48

Jesus is our spiritual bread that will completely satisfy us

Elijah was 'done' probably physically as well as mentally and emotionally.

He had made a HUGE stand against the evil powers of Baal

He had run for his life from Queen Jezebel

And he was feeling alone and isolated as if he was the only one being faithful to God

God let him rest a while and then fed him

And he was then able to continue for 40 days and nights, on a journey of about 200 miles, on the strength of the food God had provided

Jesus promises us that when we feed on Him then we will never be hungry and if we believe we will never be thirsty. In fact we will live forever. He's not talking physically but spiritually. But we are made of body, mind and spirit. All are connected and when one part is hungry then it impacts on another.

When we are lonely or physically exhausted or emotionally spent we look for refuelling from somewhere and Jesus can often be the last place we look.

We look to a bar of chocolate or a glass of wine or a drift off on Facebook or we book another holiday or we hit the sales or we do a workout at the gym or we hide away under the proverbial broom tree.....

But Jesus says

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' Matt 11:28

He says come and eat and drink of me because you will never be hungry or thirsty again
'Taste and see that the Lord is good'

Elijah was exhausted and didn't want to or couldn't feed himself
And likewise we cannot meet all our own needs. We need Christ

Sometimes it is the big stuff... significant illness or being made redundant at work or big commitments to ill or ageing family members or...

And we want to run away and hide or reach for whatever it is that gives us momentary relief

Sometimes it is just an accumulation of smaller things

I have had a FRUSTRATING end to the week

Thurs & Friday it seemed that EVERYTHING I tried to do, all the jobs I had on my to do list went on and on with complications

Trying to sort out something with the Inland Revenue and when I spoke to them and gave my National Insurance Number as ID they said there is a problem and someone would have to call me back

I tried to order something for mum on line and it was out of stock

I tried to organise a meeting and only 1 out of 8 people could make the date I suggested

I phoned someone who had enquired about having their child christened and I got their answer phone

I wanted to speak to BT and there was a problem with the name of the account holder and they said they could not speak to me

Everything I tried to do and complete and get off my to do list bounced back in some way and I had had it!!!

FRUSTRATION and I wanted to throw the towel in

Nothing big. Nothing terminal. But all frustrating and energy zapping and I wanted out

My first thought... go to the co-op and buy a large bar of chocolate and sit and eat it with a cuppa
Di's suggestion to me... take time out, with Jesus, tell Him ALL about it and let Him refresh and restore you
Taste and see that His is good Go to Him to eat and drink and quench your thirst

Panorama

I don't know if you saw Panorama this week. I watched on Catchup yesterday. It was about the huge disparity in life expectancy in Stockton. I was shocked.

Do have a look at it if you can this week on catch up, it's only 30 minutes long and see for yourself what the programme showed.

But Jesus is the bread of life for these people too.

There are people all over our country, many I suspect within our local community, who are tired, exhausted, despondent, discouraged.

I would even say that some of us feel that way.

And He wants us to come to him and feed from him

He wants us to eat and drink from His unending supplies

He wants us all to taste and see that the Lord is good and gracious

He wants us to be blessed by trusting in Him

The old saying, we are what we eat, is basically true. Every cell in our body was created from the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.

When we choose to feast on Jesus, to go to Him with all of our lives... the BIG demands and the frustratingly small..... when we let him feed us and give us water to drink then our lives will be changed, and we will live forever.... and we will want to live forever with Him.

Let's pray...