



Food is such a huge part of everyone's lives. Vital of course for our survival and growth. Many people however are spiritually hungry and starving but don't realise it. Spiritual hunger has to do with our innermost selves – our soul (mind, emotions and will) and our spirit. Many people throughout the centuries have sought to fulfil their hunger through the acquiring of wealth or fame, achievements or even in human relationships. Spiritual hunger is not quelled through these activities. In this passage Jesus explains he is the Bread of Life – the source of true spiritual food and nourishment.

Clearly Jesus is talking about his relationship with us. The most obvious path of relationship inferred here is through the sacraments where we meet Christ through recalling his death and resurrection, and forgiveness. Prayer both individually and corporate, reading his scriptures, meeting with other Christians and sharing our faith are equally important for spiritual growth.

When you are hungry, you need to eat but we need to keep in mind the balance of our diet to remain healthy. Feeding spiritually is no different. We can all have a tendency to revisit our favourite passages of scripture without venturing further into God's word. This is a bit like living on your favourite cake. Its flavour may make you feel momentarily better or even full but if this is all you eat in the longer term you will fail to gain the nutrients you require. This may lead to stunted spiritual growth and even ill health. 1 Peter 2 v 2-3 speaks of us being 'spiritual babies', but we are not meant to remain as infants. We are meant to grow '*now that we have tasted that the Lord is good.*' If we remain on milk, we will not develop our true spiritual potential. Perhaps it is time to read those more challenging passages of scripture and listen to what God wants to communicate. Likewise with prayer we need to seek a greater connection with God through his Holy Spirit in a disciplined manner.

Jesus seeks to satisfy us with perfect spiritual food as we read in Psalm 103 v 5 '*who satisfies your desires with good things*' and in Psalm 63 v 5 '*my soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods*'. God does not force feed us but awaits our co-operation in the process. The Lord's prayer mentions 'our daily bread', not just in a physical sense but also a spiritual one. It would not benefit a child to eat a big meal on a Sunday and then starve throughout the rest of the week! Regular daily sizeable chunks of healthy food are best. We should aim to cultivate the habit of reading scripture slowly and prayerfully to digest what we need each day. If we rush our food or eat too much in one go, we develop indigestion – a condition which can affect us spiritually too.

Finally, as with physical food it is important to share. The disciples were faced with a challenge from Jesus as they encountered thousands of hungry people in Matthew 14. He said '**you** give them something to eat.' A challenge indeed as we encounter individuals who may be well nourished physically in our society but are spiritually desperately hungry even if they don't yet realise their need or the remedy for such hunger.