

Life giving

John 6.51-58

Jesus tells the Jews that he is the living bread come down from heaven. The Jews question him, asking 'How can this man give his flesh to eat?' Jesus explains that unless they eat of the body of the Son of Man or drink his blood, they will not have life. That those who eat his flesh and blood will have eternal life, that he will abide in them and they in him. That he was sent by the Father and lives because of him. This is not like the bread that fed the ancestors, those who eat of this bread will live for ever.

Now read **John 6.51-58** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

How confusing this must have seemed to those who heard and questioned Jesus' words; they couldn't understand the strange things he was saying about his body and blood. Jesus tells them this is not like the bread of the ancestors; his flesh and blood will give eternal life. If we eat and drink of him, he will abide in us and us in him. This is about drawing life from the life of Jesus, belief in him is the way to a full and happy life. How does this life-giving message speak into your life today?

BREAK BREAD

Incorporate bread into one meal you have each day for a week, and as you eat it think about Jesus' words, 'the one who eats this bread will live for ever'. At the end of the week, incorporate a celebration bread into a meal you share with others, either in person or virtually. Make this special bread the centrepiece of your meal, and share with your dinner guests your insights from your daily bread eating reflections.

COOK

You will need: bread flour, water, a container. Make a sourdough starter www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/sourdough-starter.

This is living dough which needs feeding. Stick the words, 'I am the living bread' on the outside of your jar or container, and think about or discuss the words in this verse and what they mean. Use a laptop, tablet or phone, to type it out repeatedly as a written form of Lectio Divina. Use this as a mindful practice, reflecting on each word as you type it. Then have a go at making your own bread or pizza dough using your sourdough, keeping enough back to continue feeding and growing the starter.



CREATE



Gather some art materials, e.g. paint, pens and collage materials. Think about the words Jesus uses about him abiding in us and us in him. Create a symbolic self-portrait that expresses this, including: what is 'life-giving' for you, how Jesus is present in your life, and how Jesus' words make you feel.

You may wish to use this image as inspiration. See more information on the image. <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-gift-of-self-maria-hunt.html>



Give

Jesus tells those around him that his body and blood will give eternal life – what a gift! How can we give in a meaningful way to others? Unfortunately, many in the world today are physically starving. Think about giving the gift of food either by donating to a local FoodBank or by giving to the Trussell Trust, Tearfund or Christian Aid.

Plant

Plant some seeds, ready for the autumn or winter, such as winter pansies, cyclamen, broccoli or kale. Jesus' body and blood gives life as sun and water gives life to the seeds. Your seeds will give beauty and/or food in time to come, like the life which Jesus offers is the promise of eternal life to come.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus said to the people, 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will have eternal life. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my body.'



But the people argued among themselves 'How can this man say that? How can he give us his body to eat?'

Jesus replied, 'I am telling you the truth; unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will have no life within you. Whoever eats and drinks this will live for ever, and I shall take them to God at the end of time. My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.'

He continued, 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, lives in me, and I live in them. Just as the Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is what I mean by the bread that has come from heaven; not like the manna that your ancestors ate, and they died. Anyone who has this bread inside them will live for ever.'

John 6.51-58

Did you know?

- To 'abide' means to stay or remain.
- 'Ancestors': members of your family who have lived before you, also the people of Israel, whom Moses led out of Egypt and into the wilderness, where they spent 40 years.

John 6.51-58 (NRSV)

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.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will

raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.'