

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)**

**SERMON:**

**22 AUGUST 2021**

**THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**READINGS: 1Kings 8: (1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43)// Psalm 84// Ephesians 6:10-20// John 6:56-69**

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*God, you speak to us as a loving Father (parent)*

*Help us to take time to listen to your call*

*To take our place in your service*

*And to be open to what you are saying to us*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN*

In John 6 v 67 we read “*Simon Peter answered him, “Lord to whom shall we go*

“Dear God,

I am so afraid to open my clenched fists!

Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?

Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands?

Please help me to gradually open my hands

and to discover that I am not what I own,

but what you want to give me.”

– Henri J.M. Nouwen, [The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life](#)

Once again this morning we are faced with a Gospel text that deals with Jesus the bread of Life. This week’s gospel text John 6:56-69 picks up right where last week’s story left off.

Jesus is once again using the language *I am the bread of life*. He said it before, several times, hoping that the people to whom he was speaking would grab that metaphor and finally understand what he was trying to explain to them.

He thought that talking about that most basic and necessary of foods, bread, would give them an idea of how knowing and believing in him as the Son of God would feed their souls and repair their broken relationship with their Creator.

But they didn't quite understand, and in their confusion they began to get as frustrated as he seemed to be, and began to push him away. To them, what he said made no sense.

In John 6: v 60 -62 we read *“On hearing it many of his disciples said This is hard teaching who can accept it “ Aware that the disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them Does this offend you”? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?”*

V 66 we read *“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him”*

Note it was not “the Jews” who were having intellectual and spiritual difficulties with the thoughts of Jesus. It was his disciples, and many of those who had been with Jesus since the beginning of his ministry.

The grumbling of these disciples links them to the Israelites in the wilderness who grumbled because they did not trust the Lord to provide for their needs (Deuteronomy 1:27; Psalm 106:25).

We as Christians are not exempted from the usual difficulties of life, and sometimes find ourselves the objects of persecution, abuse and injustices. And we are always tempted to imagine that God has abandoned us—that God is not trustworthy. We, too, are always tempted to grumble that God hasn't treated us right especially when we endures and experience suffering, pain and difficulties

*If we look at the world, our own country and communities what do we see*

The situation in *Afghanistan*: where thousands of Afghans and foreign nationals, including many Americans, are struggling to escape Afghanistan since the rapid takeover of power by the Taliban.

- Since July Haiti experienced the assassination of their President Jovenel Moise, the kidnapping of their citizens including clergy, a devastated earthquake were more than 2000 people died.

Then there is the political unrest that led to the deaths of many people in different countries in the world and the environmental disasters like floods and wildfires that countries have experienced

What about the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic. In SA we have **2 652 652** confirmed Covid 19 positive cases **and** 78 694 deaths because of Covid. It's not only the number of positive Covid 19 cases and the deaths. But it is the

emotional, psychological, physical, financial and spiritual challenges that goes with it.

The loss of jobs, no income, you could not be around the sickbed to say your final goodbyes/ you cannot attend the funeral// you cannot go and give that person a hug// what do you say to a family who loses their mother and father or two family members in less than 48 hours

\*In our own lives we are experiencing and struggling with our own personal problems and challenges. If you've been a Christian for any length of time, you have faced difficult issues that have challenged your faith. Or, maybe you prayed for something that seemed to be in God's will and for His glory, but He did not answer favourably. Perhaps you trusted some promise in the Bible, but it didn't work out the way that you had expected.

How do we handle these kinds of hard trials and disappointments? In short, how do we persevere in our faith when we encounter things in the Bible or in our own experience that don't make sense?

***During these times we grumble and we ask how can a good and loving God allow such awful suffering?" God does not care about my life. God should protect us from he horrific happenings of life.***

***And like the disciples we say this is hard teaching this is too difficult to understand and we turn back and no longer follow Jesus?***

***Are you maybe in such a position right now? Where you want to turn back and not follow Jesus anymore, where you feel disconnected and say this is too difficult.***

In v 67 Jesus asked the twelve "You do not want to leave too and Simon Peter answered ***"Lord to whom shall we go?"***

He don't ask where should we go but to whom. You see my dear friends to whom can we can we go? Who can heal our pain? Who can give us peace?

Firstly In v 63 we read ***'The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing". The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"***

The Spirit of God is the power to convince us to believe and to stay connected when we don't understand and when we go through difficult times and no longer wants to follow Jesus. When it comes to believing in Christ, it is the Spirit who convinces us, and not our human reason or our human will.

Secondly: Every week when we come to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion (the body and blood of Christ) we receive the “mutual indwelling” where Christ lives in us and we live in Christ and in that way we stay connected. The sacrament of the Holy Communion is the means by which the strength of Jesus is brought from outside people to within them, to give them the inward anointing of the Spirit.

It is such an intimate act. We take the body and blood of Christ into our own bodies. In that moment, there is no greater closeness, no greater vulnerability to our God. We are touched by God and we are touching God. Through the Eucharist a spiritual bond is formed between us and Jesus.

We are being transformed and we experience Jesus’s love, forgiveness, peace and his compassion.

Thirdly: In our Ephesians reading we are reminded , to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power and that we must put on the full armour of God against the challenges and difficulties we will experience, and what is that armour “:The *belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith the helmet of ,salvation the sword of the Spirit and pray.*

***My dear friends to put on the armour of God is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ***

## **CONCLUSION**

“Our life is full of brokenness - broken relationships, broken promises, broken expectations. How can we live with that brokenness without becoming bitter and resentful except by returning again and again to God's faithful presence in our lives.” -- **Henri Nouwen**

**Lord to whom shall we go?**