

9 March 2008
Breaking Bread - 1
Jesus enables us to Live Life Together –
The Diet for a Healthy Life Together

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the BREAKING of BREAD and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

Today I’d like to invite you to joining me in digesting a part of Acts 2:42, which describes what the first Christians did when they got together. One item on the menu when they got together was the ‘Breaking of Bread’. That sounds very much like eating to me, and that’s one of my favourite hobbies. I love to eat.

Why did the first Christians ‘Break Bread’ together? Because they knew this truth; You are what you eat!

I reckon the first Christian service would have involved a lot of eating, Jesus was celebrating the Passover. Roast lamb, my favourite. Plenty of wine – I think there are seven special toasts at a Passover meal. The first service I find Jesus leading would have had plenty of eating, conversation, a real festive atmosphere. Sounds like the kind of service I could get used to!

And during this feast Jesus gives the best dish of all, something that was totally new. Jesus broke the bread and said; “This is my body, which is for you... he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.’” (1 Corinthians 11:24,25) Jesus also knows that you are what you eat. So Jesus invites his disciples to feast on himself – what a great way to be like him. Feast on Jesus, you are what you eat.

Jesus’ invitation isn’t to nibble, but to eat till we are full. It’s a feast. Jesus invites his disciples out for a meal and then surprises them with ‘the best of meats and the finest of wines.’ (Isaiah 25:6)

The Gospel reading for today showed at least four things we feast on when we feast on Jesus.

Jesus said to Martha; “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25,26) In Jesus we feast on LIFE. Not a here today gone tomorrow existence, but we feast on life, eternal life. Here today, growing into an exciting tomorrow. In Jesus life doesn’t end, it flourishes.

Now that sounds like the sort of food I’d like to eat. A diet that gives me vitality for life, today, tomorrow, forever.

Jesus invites us to feast on his OPTIMISM. Lazarus definitely looked finished, no hope. Four days in the hot Israel sun. Not the smell of appetising food! Lazarus seemed to be all washed up, until Jesus did what everyone thought was impossible. What are you being tempted to believe is impossible? “Jesus looked at his disciples and said, ‘With human beings this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” (Matthew 19:26) We feast on Jesus so that we might be empowered to live his possibilities.

When Jesus spoke, Lazarus came out of the tomb. “Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’” (John 11:44b) We don’t feast at Jesus’ table in grave clothes, for he has won the VICTORY. We feast on the victory he has won over sin, death and the devil. We’re winners. We’ve replaced the stench of death with the beautiful aroma of Jesus and the life he freely gives.

Jesus also calls us to feast on his EMPATHY for us. “Jesus wept” (John 11:35) He wasn’t distant and uninvolved. That’s never Jesus’ way. He always gets down-to-earth and personal. Jesus knew the pain of those who mourned for Lazarus and joined them. They didn’t suffer alone. Thank God that in Jesus none of us have to suffer alone, because Jesus has taken that horror upon himself. So we never have to say; “My God, my god why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) We feast on Jesus, holding him in our hands, knowing we’re in his hands. Tasting the wine, knowing he will replace the bitter taste of suffering with the after taste of joy, of his peace.

The early Christians continued the tradition of holding ‘the Lord’s Feast’ with a meal they called the ‘Love Feast’.

This made me think, wouldn't it be a good idea to introduce people to Jesus over a meal. The passing comment was made to me; 'wouldn't it be great to fill this building with Young People'. I thought if we all went home and over the next year invited people to feast with us and Jesus, could that make a difference. I thought, why not re-introduce the 'Love Feast'.

The menu could run something like this: Roast Lamb – reminding us of Jesus the Lamb of God, who died that we might feast. Or you might like to have BBQ Lamb chops – the Lamb of God who took the chop for us, so that we don't get the chop.

You might have fish on your dish, reminding yourself that Jesus called his first disciples to be fishers of people.

Unleavened Bread, reminding us that we're in a hurry. There's no time to lose, there is an urgency to invite others to feast on Jesus, and enjoy the taste of life, the sweet taste of victory. It's never too soon to remove the grave clothes.

Of course you'd want a good bottle of wine to celebrate the life we have with God, in Jesus. You could toast Jesus as you recall the good things he has done for you.

On the menu would be something bitter or sour to remind ourselves that when the hurts of living come, we never face them alone. Jesus is with us. The Body of Christ is with us. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when all we can do it groan.

There would be green vegetables reminding us that Jesus brings health and vitality of life.

Dessert could be a birthday cake, telling of the new birth that Jesus offers. Birth into a life no longer robbed of meaning and purpose. No longer coming to a dead-end, but looking forward to the next great adventure with Jesus. It'll be mind-blowing.

You might even like to decorate the table with candles, giving that intimate feel. Jesus has come to get intimate. He's passionate about you and your friends who have come to share this meal with him.

And during the meal there would be heaps and heaps of conversation. Sharing our stories, and also having an opportunity to let Jesus tell his story, with some time to respond back to him. What a vibrant occasion that feast could be.

We mightn't have the opportunity again for some time to fill this building, so why don't we aim for the remainder of this year to fill our dining room tables with friends, feasting with Jesus.

Start with some Christian friends for the first six weeks and then start inviting your not yet Christian friends to rejoice with you, letting them get a taste of Jesus. And if you run out of people to invite, or they don't want to come, go out and invite the hungry, the lonely, your next door neighbour.

The early Christians were marked by their feasting on Jesus as they accepted his invitation to break bread together.

I certainly believe Jesus longs to celebrate life with everyone. I certainly believe Jesus wants everyone to feast on his love for them. Who is the Holy Spirit placing on your heart to join with Jesus and you feasting around the dining room table?

Let us pray.

Jesus thank you for giving yourself so that I might feast on you, and be shaped into what I eat. Jesus grow me to be more and more like you. Remove my fears which tell me I can't invite anyone to feast with you. Rather open my eyes to the wonderful possibilities you create.