

19th Sunday of the Year B

First Reading 1 Kings 19:4-8

Elijah went into the wilderness, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. "Lord," he said "I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down and went to sleep. But an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked round, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Second Reading Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal for you to be set free when the day comes. Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.

Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.

Gospel John 6:41-51

The Jews were complaining to each other about Jesus, because he had said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." "Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph" they said. "We know his father and mother. How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus said in reply, "Stop complaining to each other. No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God, and to hear the teaching of the Father, and learn from it, is to come to me.

Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God: he has seen the Father. I tell you most solemnly, everybody who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."

Meditation

"I am the bread from heaven!" This solemn saying provokes scandalized murmurs from the crowd. A tragic misunderstanding has arisen between Jesus and his hearers. Before identifying himself as the bread of life, Jesus shared the bread of ordinary people. For thirty years his life was marked by everyday meals, festival meals, funeral meals. At the end of those years, the crowd sees only the man who has shared their bread. "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? How can he claim to have come down from heaven?" The heart of unbelief is to see in Jesus only the one who shares the bread of people, not the one who shares his own life in the bread. "The bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." Jesus is the one who gives the bread. We are tempted to reduce religion to the initiative of the one who decides for God. But it is God who first shares life with us.