

This time last week Jane and I were strolling along our favourite beach in Portugal. It was a gorgeously warm sun filled day, even though it was only 9.00 in the morning. The sea was as calm as a mill pond and the waves, if that's not to great an exaggeration to call them as such, were so so gently breaking over our toes as we walked along the water's edge.

Ever since the first occasion we walked on the beach nearly 9 years ago we have both had the real sense that this was our special place where we strongly felt God's presence; where we get a glimpse of what it may look like when heaven and earth come together.

As we often do, last week we prayed aloud as we walked along; our Father in heaven hallowed be your name.... We rejoice in being loved and cherished members of your family; for the privilege of being in relationship with you.

Thy kingdom come...thank you Lord, for the beauty of your creation.

Thy will be done...thank you Lord that we are blessed with love for each other, recognizing that God's kingdom is a kingdom of love.

Give us today our daily bread....and at that point reality kicked in....I was replete following a substantial breakfast which included eating 2 of the 8 different types of bread offered by the hotel and here I was asking for more.

Prayer means many things to many people, but at its simplest and most obvious, it means asking God for help and today's sentence is the first of four straight forward requests in the Lord's prayer

Give us

Forgive us

Lead us

Deliver us

for help in our everyday needs for food, forgiveness, safety and protection.

Those same basic everyday needs were being met by God for those in the wilderness in our first reading. They may well have wanted an abundance of foodstuffs to sustain them, just as I had enjoyed at breakfast, but there is a substantial difference between wanting and needing and God met their needs each and every day by providing just water, quail and the bread called manna.

Back to my prayer time on the beach.....I asked myself how could I, having just had a multi course breakfast, still ask for my daily bread when there are millions who will go hungry every day?

There is a huge amount to be said in answer to that question but within the context of this prayer series I was reminded that I pray this prayer as part of the wider Christian family and am symbolically standing alongside the hungry and in that sense am praying on their behalf, not my own.

I also remembered that just the previous week at my BAP all the candidates had to do a presentation on a subject which they felt passionate about and I had chosen the Eucharist. The Eucharist in a sense is both the highest form of prayer and, first and foremost an answer to our prayer.

It is the way Jesus taught us to remember him, pointing particularly to his death and resurrection. Jesus himself said he was the bread of life and the true vine and for me it is so easy to think of this part of the prayer as... *give us today our daily bread of life.*

What makes the Eucharist so special for me is that I find it the place where I can lay before God without shame or fear all my needs. As I kneel at the altar rail with my empty hands held out I do so symbolically waiting to receive the bread of life and when I am offered the cup of wine, I am not offered the wrath of God as Jesus was in the garden at Gethsemane, but his cup of salvation.

I understand that last week Jon spoke about how we should try to live our lives in a way which reflects Kingdom values – with integrity and transparency; through grace and humility; in trust and unity and by doing so we share God's love.

God's love is expressed symbolically through food and wine in the bible and are at the heart of God's kingdom both here and in heaven. On Tuesday at morning prayer we heard in Isaiah 26 *that we will enjoy a feast of rich food and well aged wines in heaven* and the next day in Isaiah 55

that we shall delight ourselves in rich food and bread which we do not have to pay for – because as our Eucharist liturgy confirms payment has already been made by Christ's death and resurrection.

Yes, folks, it's party time.

Jesus broke the traditional fasting days and explained why by saying that wedding guests were unable to fast whilst they had the bridegroom with them. Matthew and Luke record parables told by Jesus about God preparing banquet feasts for us in heaven. Jesus turned water into wine; he partied with Zacchaeus. He fed a multitude of four thousand and then again of five thousand and he barbecued fish on a beach for the disciples.

But he also offered food and wine in the more intimate setting of a small first floor room in what is often called the last supper.

And for me, it is in the symbolic actions and liturgy of the Eucharist, the Lord's supper, that all aspects of the Lord's prayer come together. As we meet around the Lord's table, by the power of the Holy Spirit bread and wine become the tangible remembrance of God's own love in Jesus Christ.

Jesus celebrated the kingdom by sharing his feasts with all sorts of people in all sorts of places and so should we – and shortly we will be invited by Jon to share bread and wine in an act of celebration and remembrance of Jesus' once and for all sacrifice.

Let me invite you to make the taking of the bread and wine we are offered today a little bit different by taking up the suggestion put forward by Tom Wright, the theologian whose book *The Lord and His Prayer* has helped form our series of sermons.

When you come to the altar rail, bring with you, in mind and heart, someone you know, or know of, or have read about or seen on television, who desperately needs God's bread, literally or metaphorically, today.

Bring them with you, let them kneel with you, in your mind's eye, with you at the altar rail, and let them share the bread and wine with you.

And when you are back in your pew, ask, other than praying on their behalf, how you might be or become part of God's answer to the prayer *'give us today our daily bread'*.

