

**1. This is our fifth and final week in John Chapter 6. As we have been reading through this long chapter, I have come to see how deep, rich and simply astounding are the events and ideas being presented in this chapter. Let me recap.....**

At the beginning we read of the feeding of the 5,000 and then of Jesus appearing to walk on water. With these moments as a springboard, Jesus has then drawn the people into this extended debate about God and who he, Jesus himself, is. First he has reminded them that it was God who provided them bread in the wilderness (trust God!), then he has said God is with them right now ('I am the bread of life!'), and finally he has said 'eat me!'

We have been shifted from reading of a miracle of feeding (to meet people's physical hunger) to some bold and frankly outrageous words he has spoken of himself (that he is the very one, yes, God, who can meet their deep hunger if they eat him!). I wonder where you find yourself in all this? Maybe it is (pardon the pun) difficult to swallow! Today we come to a climax; the question is asked, 'so what will you *do* with all these ideas you have heard?'

**2. To help us really consider this question, I want to re-read the passage slowly, and invite you to really imagine yourself into being there.** We sometimes call this way of reading an Ignatian way of reading; that is, employ all your senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) so that you can vividly imagine yourself in the scene. Where do you find yourself in the crowd, what are your reactions? We are in a synagogue on the shores of Lake Galilee – not far from the water, as we are here today, and we are hearing Jesus talking to a crowd of us in the synagogue. Perhaps you were there recently with the crowd on a hillside out of town when the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 happened... or you have heard about it from close friends.....

(It's best if you just listen, eyes shut, to help you imagine. But if English is not your first language and it helps, you could follow the reading again in the newsheet – John 6.56-69.)

**3. I wonder how you have found yourself reacting. It seems to me there are broadly two reactions in the crowd to his words, and they are the same two reactions we might have today (and yes, maybe even we have some of both reactions inside of us!).**

Maybe we shrink and recoil; this is too difficult! Or maybe, however hesitantly or shakily, we find ourselves stepping out and saying, 'I trust.'

**4. What does Jesus say to those of us (or that part of us) for whom this just sounds too difficult and hard to hear? 6.61-62 is his reaction: *Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?'* What does he mean by this?**

I think he is saying 'if you think this is hard, then what are you going to say when even more astounding things happen?!' (As we understand they did in his resurrection and ascension from the dead, which is what I think he means). So he is saying; get ready to change your perspective when you see yet more incredible things. Change your perspective! For most of us I think (for me, certainly) we expect life to go on as it always did. In the small things, in the big things. But every so often we might be jolted, and jump or land in a new way of thinking.

When investment companies try to sell you their products (maybe an investment which has had very good returns and gained in value in recent years), they are bound by law to use something like these words in the UK, 'Remember, past performance is no guarantee of future performance.' And we need to be wise to those words - many investors have been caught out!

But there can be more positive ways we understand this too. One example is our understanding that the earth moves around the sun (not as many believed before: that the sun moved around the earth). The visible reality to most of us, in front of our eyes, would be no different. We had just assumed one way of making sense of the fact the sun moves across our sky. But Copernicus, Galileo and others changed the reality for us, against our received assumptions.

I'll give you another example, from times when I have been learning music. I can read the notes on the page, see the rhythm, but sometimes just cannot make it 'sound right.' But in my experience with good music teachers, they can show me – with just a very little change, or making me see the notes on the page from a different angle – how to all of a sudden, make something sound different.

So for those of us struggling to accept these words of Jesus (they are too bizarre, too 'out there'), then maybe Jesus is calling us to 'loosen up on your perspective and the assumptions you have come to make about life. Maybe there is a different way of looking at things!'

**5. But what about those of us (or that part of us) who are saying, 'Yes, I am trusting you, Jesus'?** It doesn't necessarily feel comfortable or easy to say, 'yes, I trust.' I deliberately changed the word 'believe' to 'trust' in my re-reading; I have said that before. Archbishop Rowan Williams said something like, 'We aren't being asked to believe whether UFOs exist or not! We are not being asked whether we believe Jesus existed! We are being asked whether we trust in what he stood for, or not – that there is a life breaking through this universe which is different from the existing, old life.'

But however uncomfortable it might feel, there might also feel something like a penny dropping. Actually, for many of us, it feels maybe a bit like Peter verbalises it, 'actually, I have come this far, it has made sense, so where else can I go but further into following you?' We have taken little steps of trusting and gradually, we realise we have stepped into a new perspective, a new way of living, a new understanding of life.

The Harvard Business Review a while back (2000) talked about the core drivers in business for trust. They concluded that for anyone to trust another party, that party needed to be authentic, empathetic and have a logic about their argument. Through the gospels we see Jesus, I think, being authentic. He has to be! The least we can say about what he is saying today is that he is being authentic and honest (riskily so) to those around him about how he sees himself and the world. He is empathetic. The gospels are shot through with stories of his empathy for people (the healing miracles, for example). And yes, there is a consistent logic to what he claims, even if it is not comfortable or easy to swallow.

It's all about trust! And for those of us who have taken that step of trust, we are called ever further to step into a way of life which trusts.

**6. So let us each pray now with where we find ourselves in the story today, and maybe it might be a mixture.** Maybe we find this all too difficult to swallow. In which case, let us pray we always be people who remain open-minded to discovering new perspectives in life. But maybe we find ourselves (or part of ourselves) saying 'Yes, I trust, it might sound shocking but I do, I trust.' Then let us pray we grow in trust such that it transforms our life for ourselves and those around us.