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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

LIVING ROOM SERVICE #8 - SERMON

'For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes'

Well, this pandemic has most certainly focused the mind on 'What do we have to eat?' and 'How on earth are we going to manage?'

There is so much pain and deprivation, poverty and yes, hunger.

That surely must be our focus as a living and caring Church.

It is a well-known fact that people and communities on low incomes tend to be proportionately more generous than those with apparently more surplus to share.

Is this because they are more virtuous? Probably not.

Is it because we all feel obliged to give a bare minimum whatever our economic status?

May be.

Does it illustrate our strong attachment to the things of this world? Most certainly.

We are creatures of the dust, inextricably bound to this mortal life.

But Jesus calls us to something higher, and his gift is of a different order.

This Gospel story lays it on the line.

Why worry about what we wear, or what we will have to eat? Stop worrying about material things – do not set your hearts and minds on what you will eat or drink – or your body on what you will wear.

Well, try telling that to those lining up outside the homeless project in Arrecife, or to the mother desperately trying to make ends meet.

How can we make a difference? How can we change lives and change people's attitude?

We work tirelessly for material things because we fear that without them we perish.

At the end of the day – what is it that really matters?

The gift of God is truly what 'gives life'. The bread of life brings that inner strength and Jesus challenges us as to how we live. Time and again his message is to 'seek first the kingdom of God', and huge amounts of effort, time and material resources go into maintaining and improving our physical well-being. Yet all this will pass.

Mindful of this fact, we work to ensure that the maximum amount of anything we have can be passed to our children. Over, under and through everything we pass down the line is the 'value' of our obsession with material things. How can we effectively leave a legacy that teaches the opposite of this to future generations?

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The most dedicated Christians are tempted to become 'saviours of the world'. Sometimes we seek to be the most self-disciplined; sometimes the most sacrificial; sometimes the most heroic; sometimes the most powerful. For each of us there is a shadow side to discipleship. It may propel us into glorious limelight, or drive us into virtuous anonymity.

We often seek miracles to solve our problems or prove our faith. But Jesus said: 'This is the work of God, to believe in him whom he has sent'.

Discipleship is not about validating ourselves, or the Church, or even the Gospel – but is getting to know Jesus and to walk in his footsteps.

Sadly, the reality of our world is that we - the wealthy and powerful of the world, having bread and food - decide who will get it. And sadly, the poor still go hungry.

Of course, you and I don't necessarily feel like the wealthy and powerful of the world, especially at this time as so many suffer financial austerity. But you know as a nation, the UK, still continue to eat out more (even though this restrictive time) than any other generation before us. Obesity, especially child obesity, is turning even now into a national epidemic and yet so many children still suffer in the UK, and certainly here from malnutrition. In the UK alone 8.4m people alone are struggling to afford to eat. 1.9m tons of food is wasted by the food industry every year. How can we change this and change people's priorities?

We have good news to tell as we hear that the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to the United Nations food programme for its efforts to combat global hunger.

We are confused about what the solutions might be. So I think it is very relevant that in the Lord's prayer, that great family prayer of the Church taught us by Jesus himself, after words of praise to God, the first plea we make, top of the agenda is 'Give us today our daily bread'.

So confronted with so many problems, how can we possibly make a difference?

Week by week, we come and are fed by God's Word on the way to the breaking of bread together – but first of all we must be fed by the bread of heaven, the bread of life in our hearts.

At this special harvest time, we are called to sow the seeds of love and understanding, of caring and loving and sharing – there is no greater harvest than in bringing others to know the love of Jesus in their hearts. We give thanks and our key word should be 'gratitude' for all that God does for each one of us on a day by day basis.

It is only by that sharing and caring that we can change people's lives and help us all to focus on the true food which sustains us through this earthly life with our goal being that heavenly banquet to which we are all invited.

Amen