

Matthew 14:13–21

Over the last few days, I have tried to find a recipe to make good bread—bread that is low GI, low in sugar, high in taste, and good for a diet. I don't think such bread exists.

As I normally do, I searched the internet and found hundreds of recipes I was looking for.

They were well-explained recipes with fascinating photos that looked so tasty.

Technology is so good these days that there are countless recipes for making nutritious and healthy bread.

But in reality, I don't have the skills to make that kind of bread.

We all have a favorite bread or meal, or an ideal meal that we want to have.

Maybe an ideal meal is one that you don't have to cook or put effort into making—maybe a drive-through meal or a delivery meal can be the best meal in our busy day-to-day lives. They are so cheap, tasty, and filling as well.

So, can you remember your best meal, and when that was?
Can you remember your best mealtime?

Most of us can remember our special mealtime, when we enjoyed our meal and were well-fed.

Quickly, I can think of several occasions. Mostly, it was time with the family, especially when Mum cooked. We never forget our mums' cooking, special occasions at home, and a few times out at restaurants.

I personally enjoy mealtime with my boys. Around the table, we eat and talk about how the day went, how their day was, what they did, and I also talk about my day. There is joy and happiness in being around the table. That is a special mealtime, and every day is a special day for me.

There is a special mealtime found in today's reading.

As I look at it, it is the best meal, one of the most remarkable meals of all time.

It was just an ordinary meal. It all happened in the desert, but it was certainly one of the most remarkable meals of all.

It was only five loaves of bread and two fish, but it was a meal that fed hungry people well, a meal that was shared with and by Jesus, a meal that was blessed by Him.

This meal was served in the desert. This meal was open for everyone to have and enjoy, and each person could have as much as they liked. It was given to people so that they could be well-fed.

As we look at the Gospel, mealtimes were treated as very important occasions. There are a few occasions where it talks about mealtime and sharing food as a part of life.

Mary and Martha enjoyed a meal with Jesus. Zacchaeus was eager to have a meal with Jesus. Jesus made mealtimes an opportunity for breaking down barriers and opening people up to the love of God and the love of others.

To share a meal and food was a time for fellowship; it was a time for each person to catch up on how each other's life was going, to share a laugh, and to open up to one another.

It was more than a social time; it was a time when life was sustained by a good meal.

It was where people were "well-fed," both physically and spiritually.

As I imagine the occasion when Jesus shared the best meal with people in the desert, it was just after He lost His beloved cousin, John the Baptist. John had been beheaded by Herod and was a good friend to Jesus as well. Jesus needed some time away to grieve such a tragic event. However, because of the people's constant following and demands, He gathered them around, preached, and fed them in the desert.

In that moment,

He did not ask whether they were all believers or not. He did not insist on conformity to a set creed.

He did not say that only the morally good people deserved to eat.

He did not exclude the young or those considered second-class citizens, such as children, tax collectors, or other sinners. All were welcome at His table under the open heavens.

Jesus said the blessing and broke the bread. He then gave the broken bread to His disciples, who distributed the food among the crowd.

So they all ate and were well-fed. At the end of the meal, the disciples gathered up the leftovers and found that there were still twelve full baskets.

It was the meal that satisfied people—for their hungry souls, their emotionally dried-up spirits, and their lifetime starvation.

It was the meal that changed their whole lives. It was the meal that fed them so that they no longer looked for quantity of food, but quality of food that satisfies the spirit.

Somehow, we look for our best meal in ordinary life. Whether we feel tired and need rest, struggle with anything, feel hungry, or seek renewal, we look for the best meal to be satisfied.

Whether we are rich or not, we have mealtimes—no more than three times a day. Whether we like it or not, we do get hungry, and mealtimes constantly come to us. We cannot ignore them. We may ignore a meal once or twice, but we cannot ignore mealtimes repeatedly.

Physically and spiritually, we need to be fed. We need to be nurtured for both our normal life and our best life. Through our meals, we are strengthened, and life goes on.

When we come to Him feeling hungry and clinging to the hope of finding new meaning and new power for our lives, we discover from the Gospel that He would not let us go away.

He always embraces us, shows us mercy, and gives us the opportunity to renew our lives and be rejuvenated in His service.

Even when He was going through a personal family tragedy, even when He was physically and spiritually tired, even when it was His time of rest, He would not let people go away.

He would not let us leave feeling hungry or perishing. Jesus fulfills our needs—and more than enough.

God is always open to us with wide arms.

He is willing to bless us, ready to perform a miracle for us, and offers us a meal.

There is one condition for us: we must come to Him.

We just sang a hymn, “Come Just as You Are.” That is Jesus’ invitation for us.

We don’t have to pretend anything, we don’t need to hide anything, we just come as we are.

When we come to Him, He fills our needs.

We look for bread that sustains us all the time.

For us, the Bread of Life is an offering. It gives us the opportunity to be nourished, to be strengthened, and to move forward in life, preparing ourselves for a desert experience—to enjoy that journey with a special meal that carries a special meaning, helping us find purpose and life.

God is concerned about our emptiness, our brokenness, and our hunger. He invites us to come and enjoy the meal that He gives, to discover new life in Him, to be content with what He provides, and to live life fully.

In a few moments, we will have Holy Communion.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, Himself invites all to the table of the Lord.

For us to be forgiven, for us to be healed, for us to be fed with His body and His blood.

This Holy Communion is the sign of His promise to us—His promise of the Bread of Life that feeds us more than enough.

This meal is offered to us. Jesus invites us to come, share in the special meal, and be nourished. Be satisfied with it. Amen.