

Sketchboard Part 1

In different parts of the world people like different foods: I wonder - which is your favourite food? Is it rice, or potato, or bread? If you had to choose just one of those which would it be? Hands up for rice.... Hands up for potato... hands up for bread...?

Yes in this country we have so much choice. There is so much food everywhere, and it is easy to take it for granted. For many around the world finding enough food to eat is a daily struggle, in many places people are even starving for lack of food.

PAINT IN BREAD

Have you had a piece of bread or toast for breakfast? Bread starts off as a seed of wheat. It multiplies into many seeds, the wheat is then harvested and ground to make flour. Then it is baked in an oven to make a loaf of bread. All this happens in the fields around Birmingham, across England and the world.

But how did the seed become the loaf of bread?

Once the farmer had gone out and sown the **SEED** in the ground. Then do you know what he did? He did nothing. The **SUN** shines - and the **RAIN** comes down - and all the while the farmer waited patiently. As the Bible says: "**One planted the seed, another watered it, but God made it grow.**" 1Co 3:6

In the summer the farmer looks at the crops and says: "*it's time for harvest*". To bring in the crops from the fields used to be a lot of work which is why we have long summer holidays because everyone was needed to go out and bring in the harvest. Now machines collect in all the food.

The crops are easily damaged by too much rain so when it is all in - there's a big sigh of relief.

It is then stored up in huge barns so that the shops can be supplied and we all have food to eat. So let us all be thankful.

That is why we say thank you for the food we eat. And who do we say thank you to? The Bible says that: **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change** Jas 1:17 We thank God for he is the source of all good things.

How faithful God is: In the bible we read that God promises: "**As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.**" Gen 8:22.

That is why we along with many other churches – and schools - have special Harvest Thanksgiving services. People come to say thank you to God for his kindness in providing all we have. Do you notice that He does it for all people whether we thank him or not. God is generous to all. Christians thank God every new day for all the things our good God gives, for example we say thank you before eating meals at home.

But not everyone says thank you.

Many years ago God made a promise to a man called Abraham. God said that he would look after Him and all his children and his children's children. They grew to become a great nation.

Things didn't go well for them for after a little while the people around them hated them and turned them into slaves. In Egypt they worked hard making bricks in the hot sun and building the pyramids.

Then they cried out to God and he rescued them using a man called Moses. The Lord God set them free from their slavery. God had a special place for them to live but first he into a desert. Why? Where would they find food in the desert? Would they trust Him to provide for them? Yes God had promised to provide - and he did so by sending bread from heaven each day for them to eat.

Little bits of bread came down like rain every morning. The people rushed out to collect it in and they ate it. They called it Manna. Not only that but water gushed out from a Rock for them to drink. They must have been so thankful for all that the Lord God had provided.??

No instead they **GRUMBLLED** and grumbled and grumbled. God hates grumbling and complaining.

They not only grumbled, they didn't trust God, they became self-centered, careless and lazy.

God was hurt and grieved that the people he had promised to care for were so quick to turn away from him - that **the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.** Nu 21:6

Suffering came.

Talk Part 2

A word about suffering - Yes they suffered in the desert as a result of their grumbling and complaining.

Sin is behind all suffering and in their case it was a direct result of what they did. So it is often today.

The Lord has ordained that there will be consequences that will come to each of us when we ignore Him, fail to look to him, fail to trust Him and flagrantly ignore His good laws.

God's judgments are in the world today – for we too grumble and complain.

Everyone experiences hardship and suffering in this life, it is part of our general fallen, failed world. As Jesus said: in this world you will have trouble.

Yes we certainly do, at every level.

Suffering is part of God's just judgment on sin in this world.

It is a foretaste of the Day of Judgment that will one day come to every person who has ever lived in this world.

Sufferings are a wake-up call before the great eternal punishment to come.

God's Justice requires punishment for sin, for sin is an affront to a Holy God.

Troubles are warning signs for you and I – Will I stop and think?

What is wrong with me? what have I done wrong? Have I not loved God as I should? Have I not loved other people? Have I been selfish? Have I ignored Jesus God's only Son and the one who speaks the words of God? It is possible to be in church this morning - and yet be doing all of that.

Troubles are like symptoms of an illness which are there to show us there is something wrong inside. They are to be taken notice of.

- They are as C.S. Lewis said: "God's megaphone to a deaf world"

The great news is that in the midst of suffering God is listening – and there is nothing like suffering to cause us to look up to Him and call to Him

Invest your suffering for good - as suffering purges us, suffering helps me set the right priorities, suffering humbles me. Yes God uses suffering for good.

Hear the words of one man:

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. Ps 119:67

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. Ps 119:71

Peter says to suffering Christians remember **he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.** 1Pe 4:1

So when anyone humbles themselves and cries out to the Lord – he hears you.

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no-one to help. Ps 72:12

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, Ps 10:17

So when those suffering in that desert did cry out – the Lord heard their cry.

Did he remove all the trouble – NO – But he did give a solution.

Talk Part 3

So we pick up the story, - after the people suffered through the **venomous snakes** which **bit the people** causing **many Israelites to die** those remaining came to their senses, they **came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.**" Nu 21:7 and God listened, x2

The Lord told Moses: **"Make a snake and put it up on a pole; and anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."** Nu 21:8 *Amazing!*

- Show snake on a pole.

anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. x2 and that is what happened

- Ever seen a sign or picture of a snake on a pole? You probably have on the side of an ambulance or in hospital have a look. (*show pic*)

It is a sign of healing.

At our Sunday school last week the children read perhaps the most wonderful verse in the bible John 3:16 **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

Yes from the beginning of time God had promised that he would send someone very special into this world to help all people. The Bible says God **GAVE** his own Son Jesus Christ into this world.

Jesus lived a perfect life. He lived in such a way as to show that God his father could be fully trusted for everything, in everything, even in death.

He was so good that it made some people jealous and angry. They got together and arrested him, beat him and sent him to die in a horrible and cruel way.

Yet the reason He came into this world for the cross - was to save sinners.

‘ | ‘ Upright bar of the **CROSS**

Sin leaves us separated from God. I know you know he is there, but your sin keeps you away from him. there is an invisible dividing line of separation.

And unless there is some remedy, that separation will remain and become an eternal separation. Then, on that day, it will be too late.

- A line down the middle of the room imagine suddenly a wall appearing

In this room even, although we are all mixed together there are some who will be going to heaven and some who will be going to hell when that day comes. And we are told that later a gulf will be there so that then no one can cross over.

Now is the time to cross over, now is the time to make sure you are heading in the right direction.

- Ever found yourself on the completely wrong train? We did on holiday and had to rush off to make sure we were on the right one.

The Lord says check, **examine yourself** to see if you have Jesus in you, or not?

- Let no-one settle down and relax as I did into a seat in a train years ago. I thought all was fine. But it slowly dawned on me that I was in the wrong part of the train. The train split, some carriages went one way, some another. I saw one half go off in one direction - and myself in another.

- When it comes to your place before the Lord God it is much more serious

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Ac 17:30. That means a change of heart and a desire to go God’s way. Sins are to be confessed, sins are to be turned from.

Put the law of God up against your life like a plumbline and we are all found wanting. Who has loved God as we ought, who has thanked him, who has honoured him?, who has glorified Him?, no-one, not even close.

Look to Christ hanging there on the cross for me, Oh the great love of God in punishing his Son for my sins instead of me. **the good for the bad** - that I might be forgiven and live.

CROSS – complete the stroke across

The punishment for my sin was paid for by none other than the Holy Son of God. God showed that he accepted that payment by raising him to life again.

There are many like those in the desert who grumble and complain and sin against the Lord.

God knows this deserves death but ... can you remember what God told Moses to do?? Yes to put a snake up on a pole.

Jesus said: **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so I must be lifted up that everyone who believes in me may have eternal life.”** John 3:14,15

- Just as in the desert they had to look and live - so it is the same with Jesus – look and live x2

4a

- Hold up snake on the pole, hold up card with Ambulance and turn it over
Now he is lifted up – look to Him, look to him, and live

Part 4

Today we are thinking about harvest and we started with bread.

In our reading in John 6 we heard of Jesus feeding the large crowd with bread.

All that Jesus did was pre-cursored in the OT. Yes everything, and for the jews, indeed for all of us if we know the Bible well enough, can immediately make those connections, and there is great power when we do.

For example in the feeding of the five thousand the minds of many would go to Elisha who had twenty loaves of bread: **“How can I set this before a hundred men?” his servant asked. But Elisha answered, “Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’” Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.**” 2Ki 4:43-44

At the feeding of the 5000 large crowds wandered the hills to hear Jesus’ word. These Jesus says he had compassion for them as they **were like sheep without a shepherd.** (Mk) **“My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill.**” Eze 34:6 and the Lord promised to send the Good shepherd Eze 34:11-13 So too as the Lord provided the manna from heaven to feed the multitudes in the desert - we his people need feeding who live in the desert of this world.

As the Lord God gave the Manna from heaven all those years ago so the Lord in his compassion gave Jesus Christ who came from heaven.

Jesus said: **I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE**

Jesus is the true bread that came down from heaven - and he said to the people afterwards **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”**” Joh 6:27

For me it was a big thing to see how loving God is to me and whereas once I was a complainer and a grumbler and never said thank you - now I am **GRATEFUL** for all that he has done for me.

Many people have discovered God to be a good, generous and giving God. those who come to Him know his love and care providing all that I need, and as with many others, I can know him as my loving Father in heaven.

4b

Each day in the desert people had to go out and bring in enough food for every new day.

But **Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."** Joh 6:35

I have found that to be true, and in Jesus satisfaction and everything I need.

- **Surely a Good God Gives x2**

‘Trusting brings thanking’ is the main point today. In other words a trustful person is a thankful person. Let us be seen to be one of the Lord’s people because we are a grateful people.

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