

## SERMON: 5 AUGUST 2018 – Rev Alistair Cowper

**“Are you striving or are you thriving?”  
(Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15, John 6:24-35)**

Jesus replied, “Let me make this very clear, you came looking for me because I fed you by a miracle, not because you believe in me. **Why would you strive for food that is perishable and not be passionate to seek the food of eternal life, which never spoils?** I, the Son of Man, am ready to give you what matters most, for God the Father has destined me for this purpose” (John 6:26-27 TPT).

Daily Bread - the idea comes from Exodus 16. The people of Israel were to go out each day and gather enough manna and quail for that day. It was a test. God was waiting to see if they'd follow his instructions. They'd been complaining remember. Their hearts were hard. God wanted to change their hearts. He wasn't trying to deliberately catch them out. He wanted them to obey and in so doing to prosper, to thrive, as they put their trust in him to deliver them all the way, from their past life of slavery, through the years of wilderness, so they could make it to the promised land and the journey's end.

But life is a journey which needs to be lived one day at a time. In the Exodus story, we see that when some of the people tried to gather two days' supplies instead of enough for that day, it didn't work. The quail they gathered stank and the manna was full of maggots. It wasn't *daily* bread. It doesn't work when people strive to live in their own way rather than wait on God's providing on a *daily* basis.

'Give us this day our daily bread' is not just a line from a famous prayer, it's an essential instruction for life.

It's difficult for us to see this dependency on God when we live in such a consumer driven society. Our society too often lives on a fear of scarcity, that wants people to stock pile provisions out of a fear of running out.

(Can you think of an example of this?)

Richard Rohr said this recently about consumerism, “it is we humans, as voracious consumers, who threaten the ecological equilibrium ..... we need

to redirect our energy into different, more egalitarian, ecological and sustainable ways of relating to creation and to other people” (The Politics of Connectedness, 17/7/18).

(What do you think Rohr means by this?)

Jesus put it like this, “don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27). In other words, live not in a consumer, dog eat dog, I’m alright Jack consumer economy but instead work for a good neighbourly economy, centred in Christ, what he called, the kingdom of Heaven.

Walter Brueggemann (Pharaoh’s Economy Today) is another Biblical critic of the consumer economy, especially that in USA where he lives. He says, the consumer economy is our participation in an unsustainable economy and the reason we need such a strong military is to protect a certain standard of living. We are too often propelled by greed and the fear of running out and when this prevails we see neighbouring nations as a threat and impose high tariffs in response.

He argues that the NT is essentially a neighbourhood alternative in economics and is less about personal sin or salvation and going to heaven. Jesus was executed, he says, because the Roman Empire was scared to death of a neighbourly economy. The Jesus movement, which began in first century Palestine, was the response of a neighbourly economy to the predatory economy of Rome, which trespassed on the lives of vulnerable people, something he is arguing, that is happening even in our day.

(Do you think Brueggemann is correct?)

There is enough for everyone when we choose to live in a neighbourly way, gathering what we need and allowing neighbours to gather what they need. If Jesus is the true bread who nourishes us every day, then we need to make room for him every day, room for him to feed our minds and our hearts. When we make this our way then we are free from striving, for we know God will provide for all our need, and will inspire us each to love neighbours so that they too will prosper. Jesus has shown us that it is possible for us all to thrive together and leave our striving behind, and in this way, build a better economy, a better kingdom, for all to prosper in. I believe its what the Lord wishes for us.