

food & drink – and then suddenly the parties over, the banquets gone – and we’re lost forever.

There are so many things that promise so much in our World – but in the end deliver so little – it’s all froth – it’s all deception – and it’s all deadly. One of the tragic things is that some of those at the banquet recognise that they are still hungry – they know that they are not satisfied with what they are eating – but they cannot see anything beyond the banqueting table so they indulge themselves even more in their feast – no one has even told them about the loaf.

Even we as Christians haven’t quite cottoned on. We at least know the bread is there & respect it. We know we should want it – and we at least make motions towards it. However, along the way we first fill up on the other food available, by the time we reach the bread we’re pretty full – and we can only manage a crumb or two. Because we know that that should be our main food we tend to exaggerate how much we have eaten.

The things that we fill ourselves with are not all bad – it may be our career – it may be our families – it may even be our areas of ministry – all of these things can be good & right in the proper place – but if we fill ourselves with these things before the Lord then we will never truly feast upon Jesus - & we will not in this life experience anything like the presence of God that is available.

JESUS 1ST

I believe that the Lord is calling us to put Jesus first again. He is calling us to come to the bread before we come to any of the other food. In the

words of **Revelation 2:4** ‘you have forsaken your first love’

– I am issuing a call today – return to Jesus your first love. That is first in priority, strongest in passion.

I believe that to do this we need to set our hearts to seek the Lord – to do this we need to recognise our lack of Him – repent for our acceptance of so little of His presence – we need to ask God to help us – and day by day we need to cry out for His presence amongst us.

Personally I know that I must seek the face of the Lord as the most important priority in my life – and I know that all that I desire will never come to be unless the Lord comes amongst us in His fullness & glory – but if the Lord comes, even if nothing else on my heart is fulfilled – that will be enough.

You see if we are truly seeking the Lord there are no conditions – if you do this Lord then I will follow you – no, we must seek Him for Himself.

Psm 105 v4-5 says

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pronounced’.

Will you set your heart to do this?

RON KINGSMILL

FRESHWATERSCHRISTIANFELLOWSHIP

Preparing a people for the Lord

Jesus First



INTRODUCTION

The following is an explanation of a picture I believe the Lord gave to me in May 2003 while on holiday – and the conclusions I have come to as I have meditated upon this since.

THE BREAD OF GOD'S PRESENCE

John 6:35-40 - Jesus is the bread of life – those who believe in, cleave to, trust in & rely on Jesus will never go hungry or thirsty – and Jesus will never reject anyone who comes to Him.



Bread can be seen as representative of the presence of God as wonderfully described in Tommy Tenney's book 'God Chasers'. I agree with TT that we have settled for only crumbs of His presence when there is a whole loaf set before us to enjoy.

THE HEAVENLY MAN

While on holiday in the peak district, I was deeply moved as I read 'The Heavenly Man'. It is the amazing testimony of Brother Yun, who God called from obscurity & poverty to preach the gospel in an amazing & miraculous way – but in the face of unimaginable opposition through the persecution of the state in China.

It is the storey of the mighty intervention of a powerful God – and the patient, faithful endurance of Christian brothers & sisters in China who daily face imprisonment, torture and death – but who still follow Christ & lead others to Him

SATAN'S 2 STRATEGIES

As I have continued to read this book I have been stirred, inspired & humbled by what it tells us about life for Christians in China. As I prayed & thought about this - & particularly what an easy time of it we have as Christians in the west – I felt the Lord speaking to me very clearly.

I felt Him saying that in our nation we do not face the direct physical persecution of the church in China, but we do face an even more deadly, but subtle enemy. As I prayed about this I felt that the Lord gave me a picture of 2 great strategies that the enemy uses to keep people from Christ.

PERSECUTION – THE DIRECT APPROACH

First there is the direct approach. I saw this as a loaf of bread surrounded by barbed wire – with iron gates, guards with ferocious dogs - & then a multitude of starving people desperately pressing in to grab a handful of the bread – but being viciously beaten back by the guards.



This is the strategy of satan in China & many other places in the world. It is a strategy of applying all the force of a person, organisation or even governing authority to oppose the Gospel – and to threaten, intimidate & abuse believers in the hope that they would reject Jesus & choose a quieter, safer life of submission to them.

Although this may appear a very powerful & effective strategy – in actual fact it is not very

effective. History has shown that the church grows fastest under persecution. This is partly because hungry people know they are hungry - & will do anything to get hold of a morsel to satisfy their hunger. Also desperate persecuted people cry out to the only one who can help – God – and He hears the cry of the hungry & oppressed – and responds in power. (See Rom 8:35-39 & Psm 146:7-10)

THE ALTERNATIVE!

I then saw satan's other great strategy that is certainly prevalent here in the west – but I am certain is also used throughout the World.



The bread is here – it is not guarded – it is freely available. However it is like entering a room where there is a large banquet laid out with all of your favourite foods – chocolate, cream cakes, tables laden down with all sorts of beautiful tempting foods of different colours, textures, tastes & smells. All of it freely available – then, if you look closely, in a quite corner of the room, there is a small trestle table with a simple loaf of bread.

I felt the Lord saying that satan's tactic in the West is to entice us to eat all of the attractive beautiful food presented to us, to such an extent that most people don't even notice the loaf in the corner. We spend our lives gorging ourselves with fine