

The Bread of the Easter Women

Bread Meditations on Mark 16 v1ff & Mark 5 v21ff

Meditation I

To begin with, I bring you the bread of these three women this morning. Let us share their stories and their food.

The first loaf of bread is baked by Mary Magdalene.

She was just trying to get back to normal after all she'd gone through. Those last few days with Jesus, his crucifixion and death had put her whole life totally upside down. And to end up with an empty tomb had not made it easier either.

Everything had been just so much more than normal people could put up with...

She was sometimes afraid, she'd go crazy...

...put bread down...

They were so shocked, those three... They just ran away. They intended to keep all the news of the Easter morning to themselves.

Just imagine: How can you tell others about an empty grave where just a day before somebody had definitely been buried? How can you tell others that a dead body had disappeared? ...that there was an angel sitting instead?

These women and their friends had gone through so much already. They had seen such terrible scenes, witnessed their dearest friend's cruel death... Easy to think that they all had gone a little bit crazy, unable to bear it, unable to understand...

And still: At some point they could not remain silent.

I add the bread of Mary, the mother of James.

...put bread down...

She may have been the courageous one to speak out first. She claimed that they had a story to tell, however crazy it might have sounded. She may be the one who started the first collections of stories of Jesus...

She knew that Jesus was dead. She had heard the soldiers talking, saying how one of Jesus' friends had asked Pilate for permission to bury Jesus. And that they only let him have the body when they were sure that Jesus was really dead.

Where had he gone? Mary asked herself.

She knew that Joseph had taken Jesus' body to a garden. She knew about the fresh, clean tomb... And she and her friends had gone there because they'd wanted to take ointments to Jesus and give him the sort of burial he deserved...

Together the three may have decided to share their story with others. They knew they had something important to tell. They decided that they had to remember each detail of Jesus' life, everything about him, his face... how he'd looked... what he'd done... what he'd said...

They encouraged each other not to forget but to remember...

They'd walked with him, they'd heard him, they'd seen him heal and restore people...

They needed his memory.

And soon they understood that the others would need such memories too.

At this point I add Salome's loaf of bread. She was the oldest of the three. She did not know what to do after the experience of her friend tortured, dead and disappeared...

She was so restless and nervous.

She desperately needed something to do.

Some job to do for her trembling and shaking hands, some task to fulfil, something to aim for to calm her soul... something normal after all the unbearable and unbelievable that had happened.

Making this bread calmed her down, it comforted her, and the smell of it when it was in the oven helped her touch the ground of everyday life again.

...put bread down...

She was the one who probably remembered how Jesus had broken the bread for them.

She reminded the others of the meals they had shared and the feasts they had enjoyed with him. She was certainly there at his last supper with them...

Salome, who knew so well how to break bread for others...

Meditation II

I bring to your attention two more women... two more loaves of bread.

Their bread...

The women in the story don't have names, but I am giving them names.

The old woman is Sarah, and the teenage girl is Miriam.

Their bread is significant too after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Their stories can help believe in the new life Jesus can bring.

Their bread can nurture many...

And their life stories can encourage many...

And maybe, maybe they'd come to Jerusalem in those frightening days to be close to the one who'd changed their life, but also to be able to meet with his other friends and gain strength and courage from their togetherness.

There they were in this upper room, and met each other...

Sarah's and Miriam's lives would be connected for ever.

Especially Sarah remembered so well, when she'd managed to see Jesus on that day of her healing she'd seen this man, Jairus, kneeling in front of Jesus. He was the ruler of the synagogue. He knew who she was.

Sarah had been sick for 12 years, and nothing and nobody could help her.

But she'd known that Jesus could...

Even now, after his death, she could still feel his healing power that had entered her body and enabled her to live again.

...because she had dared to approach him and touch him...

She would always feel it.

Never forget it.

She had gone through hell and won back her life.

She had been a nobody in her world, and had become a daughter of God whose faith had been praised by Jesus. This would forever give her life a value which people can only have in God's world.

She had not been allowed to touch anything or anybody or be touché by anybody for these incredibly sad 12 years. She'd baked her own bread and ate it alone. Now she was able to bake many loaves again, and he was allowed to share them with others, invite them in and sit at the table with them... community again at last.

...put bread down...

On that significant day Jairus was weeping there in front of Jesus, telling him that his only daughter was dying, pleading with Jesus to come and heal her... Sarah would never forget how Jesus did not only heal her that day, but raised the girl from the dead. Because by the time Jesus and Jairus had got to the house, the girl had already died. Everybody thought it was too late...

However: she was not dead, Jesus told the astonished parents. She was only sleeping.

...and the people laughed at him.

Jesus sent them all away. Didn't want them around him...

He took the father and the mother and three of his friends, and they went to see the child.

He took the girl by the hand and encouraged her to get up and live. And then he asked the surprised parents to give their daughter something to eat, feed her, nourish her, strengthen her with the food a young woman needs for life... Fed and nourished by her parents she would forever be able to feed and nourish others... On that very day of her resurrection she got up, ate her mom's bread and started baking her own, as women have been doing and are doing throughout the history of humankind.

...put bread down...

Jesus just refused to give power to death and all the deathly powers that are at work in our world.

His strength is manifested in the ability not to believe in death but to restore people's lives and nurture their hunger for life and their thirst for righteousness... Eat this bread, drink this wine...

Maybe this was exactly what he did with his own death? He did not allow death the power to destroy him and all he's done...

Maybe his being gone and out of the tomb is the only way to keep him alive for those who live and for those who need him in their lives?

...keep him alive forever with a love that is so much stronger than any death could ever be?

The women were the last to leave his cross. They were the first to experience his resurrection.

They were to be the first to tell the world...

...that he is alive.

Their bread will always remind us of the great mystery of life overcoming death!
Amen.