



he that cometh to me shall never hunger

I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:49-51)

Next to the French Communion hymn, *Panis Angelicus*, this is my second favorite hymn for Holy Communion – and there is no reason that BOTH cannot be sung on that occasion. The hymn was composed by Mary Artemisia Lathbury, daughter of a Methodist preacher at Lake Chautauqua, New York. The last two stanzas were later added by Alexander Groves. Miss Lathbury had come to be known as the Poet Laureate of Chautauqua. She also wrote *Day is Dying in the West* among many other hymns while on the shores of Lake Chautauqua at the twilight hour. She possessed an extraordinary gift of verse and imagination that she described as God's gift to her. She said that God once told her: "*Remember, my child, that you have a gift of weaving fancies into verse and a gift with the pencil of producing visions that come to your heart; consecrate these to Me as thoroughly as you do your inmost spirit.*" The hymn was first published in 1877 to the tune, *Bread of Life*, by William F. Sherwin.

Break Thou the Bread Of Life

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!*

*Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.*

*Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.*

*O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
That He may touch my eyes, and make me see:
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in Thy Book revealed I see the Lord.*

The simplicity of expression of this hymn belies its deeper spiritual meaning. Its descriptive metaphors defy the imagination for beauty and spiritual depth. We can, in our mind's eye, see the beauty of the peaceful shores of the Galilean Sea along which our Lord walked, and where He called His first disciples. Overlooking the grandeur of sea and fertile valley, the Lord did, indeed, break the bread on the mount overlooking this placid scene. That physical bread of grains of wheat was symbolic of the Bread of Life which He would finally break at the inauguration of the Lord's Supper on the night of our Lord's betrayal. *Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me, As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea; Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord; My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!* One salient point couched in the first line is that fact that we must individually partake of that Bread. No one else can take it for us. Deeper in God's Word than the printed page is the depth of His Being and Meaning to us. To superficially read the Words without deep love, thought and meditation will miss the mark of understanding the gems of truth buried therein. Just as the deer, harried by the little foxes and predators of the hill country, pants for the cool, cleansing waters of the mountain spring; so, the Christian pants for the Fountain of Living Waters from on High that is our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is the consummation of all TRUTH. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's Word personified! *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* (John 17:17) The Word of God (truth) is like the bulb of a flashlight – it must have batteries to light up. So the Word, read with our eyes, is made LIGHT by the power and function of the Holy Ghost in our hearts. *Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me, As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee; Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall; And I shall find my peace, my all in all.* So the Word received must be blessed of God to us individually for our spiritual digestion. Just as Christ ordered the tightly-wrapped graves clothes of Lazarus to be removed and *set him free*, so are the filthy rags of our sin removed by the gracious mercy of our Lord so that we, too, are set free from the chains of bondage, sin, and death. We need no more than Christ for our souls, for He is our all in all. I read this phrase on the library wall of a friend, He who has Christ and much wealth, has no more than he who has Christ alone!

Christ is bread alone to those who come to His Table. Families eat at the supper together. Please remember that *where two or three are gathered together, in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* If Christ is not at the very CENTER of our worship, He is not there at all. *Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me, Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me; Give me to eat and live with Thee above; Teach me to love Thy truth,*

for Thou art love. As we partake of the Table of the Lord, we are truly enjoying a heavenly fellowship with Him, but also with the whole company of the Church – past, present, and future. There are bonds of sin that constrain one to the fires of Hell; but there are also bonds of LOVE that secure our place in Heaven. The Lord is Love to those who Love Him since His LOVE must be echoed by us.

The Word of God is a mystery to those who are blinded by the world of sin. It makes no sense to them. Our preaching of the Word, too, is foolishness to those that perish. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* (1 Cor 1:18-21) The words of today's hymn clearly relate the truth of these passages from God's Word just as every legitimate hymn must do. ***O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me, That He may touch my eyes, and make me see: Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word, And in Thy Book revealed I see the Lord.*** The human FREE WILL – always in bondage to sin – may bar the Chamber door of the heart's temple; however, If God desires entry, He will break all chains and enter in there. No devil can abide in the Temple of God which temple we are. Though we cannot evict the devils and demons of the shanties of our hearts, God alone can, and will, do so. And He will make anew our hearts converting them from 'shanties' into immaculate Temples of Love and Righteousness.