

1 PETER 2:2

²Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Babies, born into a strange and harsh new world, are utterly reliant on those who give them care. Their needs and instincts are very basic – food, warmth, love. For these things they are dependent on others, helpless, weak. We call to mind the image of the Christ-child, the God who made Himself small and helpless for the sake of us who are truly helpless without Him. Those Peter is writing to also live in this strange and harsh world, a world where we go wrong, where the only comfort is from God.

But babies grow. Hopefully they become wise, kind, productive members of society – but only with the nourishment of those who care for them. ‘Milk’ in the Bible often represents blessing and abundance: a mother gives her milk freely, out of love, whenever the child needs it, without condition, without the child needing to ‘earn’ or ‘deserve’ it.

It’s a source of life, a sign of care, but it’s also easy to digest. If you give a child meat as soon as they are born, they won’t have the teeth to chew it.

Just so, when we come to Christ, we are born again. We begin a new life as children of God. God gives us space for growth, for maturing, for nurturing – a process which lasts our entire lives. We never outgrow the milk, for what we start with on this journey sustains us throughout our lives as Christians.

What is this milk, which strengthens and feeds us to grow in this new life?

I think it is the word of God – through scripture, and the call of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. We are fragile, but His word strengthens us. We hunger and thirst, and only He can satisfy us. We are surrounded by hatred and division, but His abundant blessing shows us the possibility of love and joy.

Out of the experience of all that has been given to strengthen us, we can call others, and let them be nourished in turn. We can spread the love of God so that those around us might also be strengthened and succoured by His word. What those five friends who we hold before God most deeply need, is given by God.

Christ calls us to be child-like, to lean not on ourselves, but on the promise of God, the person of Jesus, and the presence of the Spirit. Let us be like children, in our simple need for, and dependence on, God alone to strengthen and nourish us, as we grow towards His salvation.