

More about Bread!

John 6:25, 41-51

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Today we continue our look into the sixth chapter of John. We continue our look into what it means to be a steward of God. We have talked about the stewardship of money, the stewardship of fulfilling the mission of the church and today we turn our attention to being a steward of the relationship God has with us. In the Old Testament, God created the earth and all living things. Then humankind fell and separated ourselves from God by disobeying, by choosing to do evil. From then on God no longer walked with humans. God no longer strolled down through the garden. We would have stories of angels, or a voice from a bush, but no direct connection between God and humans. No more connection on a one to one bases as casual as it was in the garden of Eden, that is until Christ. A simple carpenter's son. A Jew of a back wood town along a major trade route in an insignificant country. A man who walks and fishes and eats and laughs and breaths and sleeps just like you and I but also happens to be fully God. Suddenly once again we see that the relationship is renewed, reconciled, reestablished. God is here among us, with us, in us. But yet not everyone gets it.

When Jesus called himself the bread of life, the Jews (that's the temple leaders) understood exactly what he was talking about, but it must have confused them greatly. They had always referred to the Torah, the law itself, as the "bread of Life" given by God through Moses. It was understood as food for the soul, just as the gift of manna was food for the body. When they wanted to know God they drew closer to the torah – the bread of life. When they wanted to find out what God had in mind for them, they sought the answer in the word of God, the Torah, the bread of life. So Jesus takes this same image, this same title that the Jewish priests and scribes has said about the law, and applies it to himself, when he says, "I am the bread which came from heaven."

That must have shocked and disturbed those priests and leaders of the Jews. They were all about the law. They knew God through the law. Moses had laid down the law in the torah to show people how to walk in righteousness. Through the law the people were told right from wrong. They knew what God like and what God disapproved of by the law. And now Jesus is saying he is directly from God. A gift that is greater than manna in the wilderness, a gift greater than the law given through Moses, greater than the Torah. So the Jews began to complain about him. He's not from heaven, we know his family, he is not greater than Moses and the Torah, he is the carpenter's son from down the street.

You see the problem was that they knew Jesus, the boy, the young man and the man who stood before them now. And yet they didn't know God fulfilling the promise of the torah and the prophets. They didn't know God, the one who stood right before them incarnate in human form, sent to redeem us and grant us a life everlasting. God was right there with them and yet they never saw him, they simply saw the young boy that had grown up nearby. They didn't see the blessing of God that had touched the earth and stood in their midst. Is it much different today. It certainly is hard to see God in the familiar – in the world, in our family, in our relationship, in daily events.

Where you are at right now in your life do you feel and know God is with you. Have you talked with God lately? Have you sat in silence this morning to listen? Some days I have felt that God is not near, even in prayer or in silent moments when we are feeling out most needy. But, as I look back over my life, I see so many times when I was struggling, needing help, doubting, in those times God was there and placed events and people in my life to help me. Sometimes God is right there with us and we don't even notice.

It doesn't happen like we would like to see it in Holly wood, the angel suddenly appearing and the glowing, wings unfurled or the halo shining. And then everything works out. Its not like Touched by an angel, where you struggle the angel appears and then within five minutes everything is all better. Instead God present in our lives, having that relationship is something we need to work out. To be stewards of this gift God has given us we must work at it like any relationship. To use the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows us to come before the Lord in prayer, in reflection, in discussion, in listening. To hear God in our day to day conversations, feel God's presence in the darkness of the night, see God's hand in those moments that we need help. But be assured God is with you, God has come into your presence.

Jesus tries again to tell the Jews this in our reading. Jesus says, "Do not complain among yourselves". Like a teacher scolding an unruly class Jesus is saying stop being disruptive and quiet down, I am about to tell you something even more important. "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day." Again these were familiar words, ordinary common statements used by the rabbis. They would use that very express to draw near to the torah, to talk about coming to a fuller knowledge of the law, to become a keeper of the law. But again, Jesus puts a new twist on their own sayings. He says that it is God who draws us to him. It has the familiar ring to it, and yet now Jesus has changed it just a bit, frustrating the Jews, confusing them and challenging them until they are offended. Jesus is teaching about the relationship between himself and God and through him God with all humanity. But all they hear is a man saying he knows better then they do. They have

tunnel vision because they can only see God in one way, the supreme Lord that lives far off, that you don't converse with but instead follow rules and laws that help you make yourself right with God. Surely this carpenter's son can't know better than them.

So Jesus uses a story that is familiar to them as he continues to explain what he means – the story of the manna in the wilderness. Their ancestors ate the manna for forty years and they began to forget who it was that provided for them, they took it for granted and they died.

Now Jesus says they have another chance. He is the true manna from heaven, the manna that lasts forever. That "whoever eats of this bread will live forever". God has given them the greatest gift. While yet they were still looking for signs and wonders, remember last week they asked Jesus what Signs he was going to make for them that day. While they were still looking for what can you do for us today, the sure thing that can blow them out of their doubts and guarantee an assurance of his power. While they are still waiting for this all to happen, Jesus is asking them why they can't see God working in the familiar, right here before them in their presence? Are you still like your ancestors so long ago who didn't see God's gift in the manna and died. Can you accept that God is acting, bringing his kingdom about in the person of even a lowly carpenter's son from Nazareth.

That is the same question he faces us with today as well. Is it possible that even God's Son can become old hat for us? Is it possible for us to be so blinded by our quest for what we want our thirst for riches of daily bread that we no longer see the one who works in, under and through this simple gift that is offered before us at our Lord's table?

We are stewards entrusted by God with the gifts of his love. May we realize the importance of that promise. That through this gift of bread of life we are drawn to him as his children in a relationship with a loving Father who will never betray us, hurt us, abandon us, or forget us. Instead we are promised a relationship of love and forgiveness now and forever. Jesus says, "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." God loves us so much that we are given life through the flesh of Christ. Take care of that relationship of love, return the love of God and be with the Lord, now and always. Amen .

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty Lord, you sent to us your bread of life, Jesus Christ our Lord. He comes to draw all people into your glory, through him we come to know your ever powerful radiance and love. Grant us the hope and assurance of your eternal life, to guide us in this life towards you in all your ways.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

O Heavenly Father, we ask that you bring us into new life, new joy, restore us to your everlasting kingdom and make us your witnesses of your love. Rain down your power on this time and place, spread throughout the world to raise up peace and justice, end disease and disasters and grant us the wisdom to care for each other as brothers and sisters in your kingdom.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer.

O Great Comforter, send forth you spirit of healing to spread upon all those in need, to lift up the hurt and broken, to mend the bodies and minds of all those who seek your help in their moments of need. Grant healing and comfort to those in hospitals, our shut-ins and especially Jarrett Peck, Ryan Bevins, Sandra Fridinger, The Family of Sylvia Dillow, crawfords and

And all those we name now in our prayers to you.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for this family of God; teach us to be your stewards, to manage the gifts that you have given us, and be a living witness of the grace and love that you have bestowed on us. Make us your church sent forth with a mission to spread your word and share your love.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.