
Church of the Beatitudes United Church of Christ

Bread of Life

A Sermon by

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Scripture: John 6:24-35

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Again this week, who is this Jesus to you? To your friends? And who does he say he is?

It sounds like the people first go after him because he feeds them sounds like church to me. The way to a congregational man is through his stomach, isn't it? After all the very first thing that pricked my mind when I heard Jesus is the bread of life was "Nancy continuously telling me, "Bread is just a useless carbohydrate;" so are Adkins Diet, South Beach Diet." They're all telling us bread is bad for us. Well then what does that say about Jesus as the "Bread of Life" is he just useless in today's world? Certainly some would say so.

I was playing tennis with a real nice college student the other day and when he found out I was a pastor he asked me, "As smart as you are why are you wasting your life on that? Useless Stuff. I asked him what he thought I did. He quickly named two useless TV evangelists with quick answers, preaching hate those people and do what I say and you will be rich talk. And he wondered whether it was the money? He felt it unconscionable that Pastors were becoming millionaires.

At this point I interrupted his comments and said, "Well I don't serve a church that judges people by the color of their skin, the side of the border that you were born on, or the size of their 201k's, (since the depression hit I've stopped calling them 401k's) . We believe God is still speaking and part of what God is saying to us these days is God loves all the people. Sometimes God may not like certain actions but even that is God's to judge not us.

At this point his eyes glazed over. I asked him if he needed a drink, but he said it must be a strange church I said the strangest. Families in our definition are people that chose to love and care for each other, often though not always living in one household, sometimes that means a man and a woman, sometimes with kids, sometimes they are their biologic, sometimes chosen, some families are one parent with kids, sometimes, a grandparent or two and children, sometimes two men with a child or children, sometimes two women, children or not, biologic or not, married or not, sometimes I don't know what the combinations are accept they show up at church together.

At this point he said, "Do you take people like me?"

Yep! Even people like you. I think your pretty fine for telling me the truth. You're kind of growing on me.

Then he said to me, "I don't know this Jesus you're describing! Who is he, are you sort of nuts or is he really that open and accepting?"

I believe he has always been that loving. I believe he already loves you I know my church could and I am beginning to really cherish this conversation. We are not a church for the faint of spirit we often struggle with issues when we have concerns or questions; we believe it is appropriate to seek, to wrestle out the truth best we can. We celebrate our diversity; we believe that there can be more than one answer, more than one opinion; but about Jesus we're pretty clear. We are open because he was open to us, he welcomed us into his realm, even when we may not have been deserving and we are not about to say now that we are in the rest of you have to live by another standard.

I don't know maybe I spoke to freely Maybe some of you arrived here perfect and residents in this community before Jesus forgave or gave you anything.

If God is the giver of Manna, what hungers do you still cling to? Are you willing to recognize your deepest longing such that is our deepest desert longing You can risk coming to table with Jesus to be feed the gift of Life?

Was there a time when you really felt like you needed an incarnate God present in your life say, like Jesus? A time when you asked for the gift of healing, or wholeness, or salvation you needed help and it came? Maybe it was immediate or you realized later that though you felt lost and alone that God was carrying you in that difficult time.

One of my friends was having this great life kids were growing and doing well, work was solid, house was all set up And then His wife who had been acting a bit funny began drinking and staying out all night. All in a moment it seemed his life moved into the desert of Suffering.

- Maybe you had a good amount of stocks stored in your mattress when all of a sudden the bottom dropped out of the market there went your retirement security,
- Or your house de-valued,
- Or the person in your company that has become known as the “Grim Reaper”, or “Firing Dude”, calls you in for a private meeting.
- Or your balloon mortgage rate sky rocketed and all at once you have taken up residence in your car, washing each morning at Burger King, trying to figure out a way to sleep in your storage unit Have you had such a moment or several of these combined?

It is amazing to learn how much you really don't need. Once you begin the tumble into despair, social ostracism the question is fairly quickly posed' what really has value, who are my true friends? All at once not letting homeless people eat a meal on the lawn at Cross Roads United Methodist means something quite different to you. Like you're going to have to try to sneak food out of the grocery store dumpster again to feed your kids or hang around the restaurant garbage bin, yet another night, in plus 100 degree heat with no clean water to hydrate, sleep under the bridges, hide from the sun under trees and wash in the canals.

How far can you fall?

God asked us a long time ago to build a social network to take care for the widows, orphans, less fortunate FOR ALL THE PEOPLE. Remember that God? The “Bread of life” God. It got written down in several places but Jesus said it best when he said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. The Homeless roles which include several of your old friends maybe some of you are growing those dirty messy people. Have you been talking to that God lately? Is that God the one you are communing with? Are you on the team that is trying to care for them or are you on the side that is working toward keeping them out of your neighborhood? House prices might drop? They may not look nice? They make noise going through our trash picking out food. Jesus once told the story in Matthew, “when did you see me hungry or thirst when you took care of one of these homeless you took care of me. “Have you gotten to know the incarnate presence of God in the flesh?

Some of the places where God gave us signs of presence among us were in the story of Noah; God gives us the rainbow as a sign that God will not destroy us by water again. Do you know other places in the Bible or in your own life?

That Bread of Life that life giving presence in our lives is not always easy to hang on to and at times when we try to control and define who is worthy and who is not later it breaks our hearts

“What is of real value?”

What is essential to life and community with God and others? If I had screens to project on now I would show you community pictures of drive by shooting holes in homes down the street from you, gunshot victims, the multiple pregnant teenage girls in our schools, the number of girls getting abortions, the trash around our neighborhoods that we walk past and don't take time to cleanup, the volumes of un-recycled material thrown into our garbage because we are too lazy to pay attention, people making hospital visits, going to Bible study, attending Youth group, going to Wednesday night Taste and See dinners, people singing in church, gathering at work place fountains, crying at the death of a loved one, young boys and girls out shopping for school .

What is essential to life and community with God and others and what is illusion? The illusion of American society is that if I can take care of myself, if I can produce enough, I don't have to care about anybody else. If some person, group or community doesn't do what I want or value what I value, I can just write them off. I don't have to support them **THAT IS NOT OUR WAY.**

What 'is essential is to welcome all the people, to offer care and support to those in need, to love one another, to work for Justice and peace for all, not just those desirable few that agree with us, to love unconditionally.

Who is our Christ?

The Christ is that part of us that seeks not to throw resources at a problem, but builds relationships and develops resources to meet the needs that we together define. The Bread of Life grows out of the relationships, dialogues, doing and being what is necessary for all the people.

I REMEMBER one day back in elementary school my teacher held up a picture of the earth and asked us to find our small town on the map. One of the kids asked, “Where are the lines, there are none?” How do we know where we are if there are no definite what's mine, what's yours Not how much to give if there are no lines?

First off God says it's all God's. We in fact are God's. Love one another. Be the bread of life.