

**Proper 16 Year B**

**8/22/2021**

**1 Kings 8:1, 6, 10-11, 22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69**

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Today marks our final reading from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John.

Throughout these last few weeks as we have slowly been making our way through this chapter, we have heard one theme continually be proclaimed:

Jesus is the bread of life.

This bread was broken and given for us.

It has at least a double meaning...

First, that Jesus gave up his life on the cross so that we may have eternal life.

And with this it refers to the sacrament of communion...

The Eucharist...

Jesus says: *the one who eats this bread will live forever.*

We remember and participate in the cross of Jesus by eating his body... the bread of life... in communion.

It is also a call to follow Jesus.

You see eating the bread of life...

Also means we feast on him throughout our days.

The Israelites were given bread... they called it manna...

God gave to them in the wilderness to survive.

They had escaped the slavery in Egypt and spent time in the wilderness...

you can read about this in the second book of the Bible... Exodus.

But that bread did not sustain them for eternal life.

They eventually died.

Jesus is saying that he is the bread of life... and when you feast on this bread you will live forever.

It is a call to follow Jesus.

To die to ourselves and to follow Christ.

To feast on his life...

To serve him and not ourselves.

And when we feast on him... we will live forever.

And this is not an easy message.

We as humans naturally want to serve... us... ourselves.

We naturally want to please ourselves.

But to truly serve our Lord Jesus Christ... in this world...

In this day and age...

In the climate we are in...

Is not easy.

It is a difficult message.

And many thought the same in Jesus' day.

That is why our Gospel tells us that when many of his disciples heard the words of Jesus they said:

*This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?*

And then St. John writes:

*Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.*

They left Jesus.

It was too hard.

They did not hear what they wanted.

So, they turned and left.

Following Jesus is not an easy road.

Jesus is the bread of life given for the world...

whoever eats of this bread will live forever.

At the dawn of the Space Age, it looked like the United States was losing the Space Race — and soundly.

The Soviet Union had launched the first artificial satellite in 1957. And in response the USA's Vanguard rocket blew up on the pad.

Both nations then began to work on putting a human into space.

The American Project Mercury was projected to put a man in orbit by late 1960, but delay after delay allowed the Soviets to put a man into orbit in April of 1961.

Yet on the basis of that suborbital flight, while American morale was low, President John F. Kennedy, at a Joint Session of Congress on May 25, 1961, *committed the United States to landing a man on the moon by the end of the decade* and bringing him back safely.

Some people questioned the sanity of this proposal.

How could we talk about going to the moon when no American had even been into the orbit, and the Soviets seemed to be so far ahead?

It seemed a preposterous goal.

Nevertheless...

Four months later, President Kennedy dug his heels in and said:

“We choose to go to the moon.

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, *not because they are easy, but because they are hard*, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.”

Did you hear that?

The president said that the reason for going was “not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

In today’s gospel passage some of the disciples told Jesus that his teachings were too hard.

They wanted something easier.

And many of them left because, as they said,

*“This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?”*

It’s a good question for us too...

Let me re-phrase it with this:

*Why do you follow Jesus Christ?*

Why?

Is it because you love to come to church on Sundays and hear a preacher preach to you?

Probably not.

Perhaps it's what we always have done... we were raised in church.

Or maybe we started when we came into difficult times and Jesus gave us a sense of peace.

But why do we still follow Jesus Christ?

Many in our Gospel weren't ready to answer that question... they walked away.

Perhaps they did not like the music at the church service Jesus was leading...

Perhaps they thought he was a little too tough...

the way he talked about sin...

sounds a bit judgmental.

Perhaps they found out that Jesus wasn't on their political side...

so they rejected him.

The scriptures say: *...many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.*

So Jesus turned to his closest group...

The twelve...

The ones that he was the most vulnerable with...

The ones that he spent the most time with...

And he said: *Do you also wish to go away?*

And it was Simon Peter who answered him...

He said:

*Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

*We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*

Friends, St. Peter's words ring true for today too.

*To whom can we go... it is only Jesus who has the words of eternal life.*

Only Jesus is the bread of life.

Where else can we turn?

We certainly try...

Many of us do...

We can turn to money... but it fails us.

We can turn to spiritualism... but it ends up shallow.

We can turn to politics... but soon they will let us down.

We can turn to other religions... but we will discover their lack of grace.

We can turn to nationalism... but it only leads to hatred.

We can turn to consumerism... but it will leave us only wanting more.

When we come to the end of our rope.

When we come to the dark night of our soul.

When the world comes crashing down...

We have the choice to turn to all sorts of things in life...

But I confess with St. Peter that only Jesus Christ has the words of eternal life.

I believe with St. Peter that I believe and know that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

There is no other.

He is the bread of life.

And I believe his words:

The one who eats this bread will live forever.

After 5 weeks in John chapter 6...

this being the final week...

May we truly take to heart the words we have heard from our readings...

The words that we have heard preached...

Jesus said:

*I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

Jesus said:

*I am the living bread that came down from heaven.*

*Whoever eats of this bread will live forever;*

*and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*

Jesus said:

*...the one who eats this bread will live forever.*

There is no other place to go...

Jesus *is* the bread of life.

May we turn to him...

May we turn our eyes... and fix our gaze... upon Jesus.

For it is only in him that we find mercy and grace.

It is only in him that we find steadfast love.

It is only in him that we find forgiveness of our sins.

And it is only in him that we find eternal life...

Our hope.

I am still struck today by the first reading from yesterday...

At Tony's burial service...

From Lamentations:

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,*

*his mercies never come to an end;*

*they are new every morning;*

*great is your faithfulness...*

May we eat...

Feast...

On the **Bread of Life**.

Amen.

