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John 6:35, 41-51

Pastor Katya Brodbeck - Powell United Methodist Church

### “The Bread of Life”

Who loves bread? Or should I say, who does not love bread? I know, I know, some of us cannot have a lot of it and cannot have it at all for various reasons. But the fact that we don't eat bread does not mean that we don't love it, right? My husband played a concert in Switzerland this summer and I had a privilege, finally, to go with him. We spent two days in Paris, and France loves its bread. I mean, they love bread. Especially, famous French baguettes! I ate a baguette almost with every meal. And I ate a baguette and a croissant together for breakfast one time! That is traditional French breakfast. Our second day in Paris, we had breakfast at a café and there were two choices of breakfast: French and English. English breakfast basically looked like an American breakfast, eggs and some meat. I decided to order French breakfast. They brought me some jelly and butter, a small cup of espresso, a croissant and a piece of fresh baguette. It was great! I think this image of bread is so easy for us, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to grasp and think about as it was for the crowd that Jesus was teaching to.

Let's look at the context where today's scripture is placed. It is chapter six in John's Gospel. The whole chapter begins with the image of bread. What we find there is the most familiar story of feeding of five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus fed a large crowd who was following him and had nothing to eat with them late in the day. After they ate, the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee and Jesus joined them later walking on water at night. In the morning, when the crowd woke up and noticed that Jesus was not there, they took the boats, crossed the sea and came to Jesus asking him questions. Jesus knew that the crowd was following him because the crowd was hungry. But hungry not only for physical food, but also for spiritual.

I listened to a Ted Talk the other day about spiritual connectedness by a spiritual teacher and a Bhakti Yoga practitioner, author and philanthropist. He had the privilege of meeting Mother Theresa. She told him that the greatest problem in the world is hunger, not the hunger of the belly. If you give somebody food they will be satisfied, but there are hearts that are starving. And one of the examples of this starvation is our disconnection between each other and God. We are the people who are the most connected to each other lived on the planet Earth. I mean that we are connected externally, television, social media, internet, wifi, smart phones. But we are the most disconnected people from each other and the source of our being, God. When we wake up in the morning, at least, I, I look at my phone, checking emails, news and Instagram. Instead of lying there quietly listening to God's voice to guide me on my day, instead of thanking God for the day, instead of looking out of the window and enjoy God's creation. There is also disconnectedness of our minds and our

bodies. We are doing a million tasks at once. Our bodies are doing three things, and our mind is thinking about three more things simultaneously. When I am cleaning, I am doing dishes, cleaning the toilet and the tub, listening to the ted talks or podcasts and texting with my husband, all at the same time. I can imagine some of our students are probably doing homework, listening to the music, and Snap Chatting your friend, all at the same time.

We are busy, hurried, and distracted people. Just like the followers of Jesus, and the Israelites, we go hungry. We are hungry for meaning, we are hungry for authenticity. We are hungry for guidance and direction in our lives. We are hungry for understanding and acceptance. We are hungry for someone to tell us we are loved just as we are. We are hungry for having a connection with the One who gives life, the bread of life.

What an amazing and simple image, bread. Jesus often used images that were taken from common life, like water, wine. And these images, just like the image of bread points to the mundane, simple, the everyday, the routine. Bread or we can say food is something that we need every day, and cooking food or getting food is something that we have to do every day along with brushing of our teeth, taking showers, going to work, going to school, going to sport practices, doing homework. And sometimes we think that God is not a part of our routine, daily lives. We tend to think that God is with us when we are gathered for worship, or in Sunday School and when we are together with other Christians. We tend to think that the sanctuary is more holy than our work place and home, that the clergy are more holy and closer to God than others. We tend to think that that there are parts of our lives that are disconnected from God and God's work in us and around us.

We are just like crowd that followed Jesus. Remember in the text, the crowd complained when Jesus told them that he was the bread of life. We are like them who could not believe that God was Among them, that God would choose to come in a human form to Earth. Which made me think of the good old Orthodox Christian doctrine, the incarnation. I know, I know. Big Christian word. Incarnation. Basically, what it means is that God came down from heaven to become a human being. Jesus was human and divine. Or we can use the language of the Gospel of John, the Word made flesh. It means that the divine was in this body that we all have. The divine slept, went to the bathroom, ate tons of bread. God lived the everyday and the routine of life. "I am the bread that comes down from heaven." The human wrapped in the divine, the ordinary wrapped in the sacred.

The good news of the Incarnation is that God is with us. God is a part of our whole lives. Jesus is a part of our daily activities. Jesus is a part our getting everybody ready out the door to be on time to work and school, in preparing the meal, in gathering with friends. Jesus is a part of our time of worship and studying the Bible. Jesus is the part of our routine and mundane, of our most exciting and our saddest moments. We bless our backpacks today as a reminder that God is with our children when they at school learning, growing, and being challenged. God is here and is a part of our every day life. So the question for

us is How do we let the whole of our lives into God's hands? How in this business of body and mind, can you and I have a deeper connection to the "bread of life," the one who satisfies all our needs?

When I think about my own life, one thing that I already do and helps me being aware of God in my life as the life's stress takes over me, is when I go to bed, I thank God for the day and ask for forgiveness. It helps me remember that I am God's child and a human who makes mistakes but through it all God is with me. The other thing that I am thinking of doing and actually did today is to begin my day with thanksgiving and asking for guidance and strength for the day instead of looking at my phone. And maybe you can try doing these two things. And maybe you are already doing them. That is great! You can begin your day and end your day with a short prayer to God at any age. So at least the beginning and the end of your day are wrapped in the awareness of God's living presence with us, God's living bread, the bread of life that came down from heaven. Amen.