



*“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” (John 6:51).*

Though I am not preaching on Sunday, this verse from the gospel reading has been on my mind and in my heart. On the surface Jesus’ words seem fairly harmless. *“I am the bread of life”*. I can preach that. I mean how hard is it to talk about getting nourishment from Jesus? I could stand up in the pulpit and point out the differences between God’s nourishment and the hollow nourishment of the world. I could point to the times in Scripture when God has miraculously fed God’s people on their long and arduous journeys of faith. Or I could use this text as an opportunity to talk about the importance of being fed weekly at the altar table of God’s love with a piece of bread and a sip of wine. I could go to all these places and probably offend no one; At least no one who has made the “journey” to church on Sunday morning. But I can’t go there. Not this week.

*“The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”* Jesus’ flesh? Really? How in the world can the religious folks of Jesus’ day even stomach such a shock jock phrase? Any good religious person knows that talk of flesh is unclean. It is not kosher. So, who does this Jesus think he is claiming that it is his flesh which truly nourishes? Jesus’ declaration turns everything upside down. Every faith assumption ever held is undone by this one sentence for in Jesus’ day, flesh and blood are ritually unclean. If contact is made with either,

folks are cast out of community. Without community survival is almost impossible.

Can we even begin to grasp the radical nature of Jesus' words? In what equally scandalous ways does Jesus call us to abandon our theological certitudes? In this post-modern world in which the church no longer finds itself at the center of society's norms and mores, what is Jesus calling us to do and to be? How open are we to God acting in new and creative ways? How open are we to God's reforming word re-defining all that we have taken for granted in the last 500 years? How open are we to God changing the very definition of church? The scriptural canon is certainly closed, but is it possible that God is still speaking?

Jesus' words are radical both for his day and for ours. But they are also filled with good news. In keeping with the Hebrew notion of flesh and blood containing one's total being, when Jesus speaks of giving his flesh and blood, he is promising nothing less than the giving of his entire self. I don't know about you, but I can't begin to get my head around that kind of love; that kind of love that holds nothing back. And yet it is precisely that abiding love which not only nourishes and sustains us, but sends us back out into the world to feed God's sheep. How will we feed God's sheep in the weeks, months, and years to come holding nothing back? Join me in worship; in that place where the crucified and risen Christ has promised to be. And let us discern together where God is calling us to travel and who God is calling us to be; no matter how radical and scandalous the call.

Peace and Love,

Pastor Doug