

## **Sermon John 6:35, 41-51**

How many of you have baked bread? Janet Hunt tells the story of her experience baking bread.

"I have been baking bread for as long as I can remember. It was a regular occurrence at the home I grew up in: the aroma of fresh baked bread.

It was, I'm told, an even more regular happening in the home my mother grew up in back in the time when bread could not be bought as easily as it can be today. My grandmother, whom I never knew, baked bread. My mother baked bread. And so do I.

And while it's true my choices for baking are not as restricted as that of my grandmother --- who baked bread in the heart of the Great Depression --- so I'm told she always used water instead of milk. Bread is pretty basic. All you finally need is flour, a little salt, yeast, water, and maybe a little sugar or other sweetener. Patience and a decent oven help, too. Still, all in all, bread is pretty ordinary. Every culture enjoys some form of it. In fact, I understand that for more than 6,000 years, people the world over have been baking bread. <sup>1</sup>

And so it is that Jesus offers us today the image of bread as a way to better understand him. Indeed, his first listeners wondered, too, at the ordinariness of the man whose message they had come to hear. They wondered at who he thought he was --- this Jesus whose parents they knew so well. They wondered how one so much like them in so many ways could begin to think of tying himself to heaven when he says, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." Indeed, no doubt they wonder how it is he can make such extraordinary claims about something so ordinary: claiming to be the bread which will satisfy hunger and quench thirst for all of time.

As we read and hear the text this morning we must remember that it is John the evangelist who writes the story. On this the third of five weeks discussing lessons about the bread of

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Hunt – dancing with the Word - <http://words.dancingwiththeword.com/2012/08/on-baking-bread-and-bread-of-life.html>

life, John makes a shift from describing Jesus followers as “the crowds” to Jesus followers being called “the Jews”. Jesus refers to himself “as the bread that came down from heaven, (v.41)” then a little bit later Jesus says to them, “Your ancestors are the manna in the wilderness and they died. (v.49)” I am sure you like I might ask the question, Why did Jesus not say “our ancestors” after all he was Jewish, as were his followers, including his mother Mary too. Jesus appears to be standing over and against “the Jews” as though he were not one of them. Manna you see has become a death sign while Jesus the life sign.

“I am the bread that came down from heaven...Do not complain among yourselves, “No one can come to me unless drawn by my father who sent me. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

This is a challenging comment for the followers of Jesus – and for us. One might think you don’t just come to faith by yourself, through your own deduction, reasoning, and insight alone. You are wooed, invited, even cajoled.

At the same time this leads us to two controversial thoughts. (1) No one comes to the Father (who is drawing people to himself for the healing of the cosmos) except through the bread of life. (2) and adding insult to injury of current, narcissistic cultural norms, no one comes to Jesus unless God wants one to come.

How then should the church, and the “unconverted” of the world,, hear the gospel? According to Jesus, it is not our religious experience, our philosophical insight, the accident of our births, our economic status, nor most of all, God help us, our choice-that puts us in the realm of light that is the presence of Jesus within the community of faith.

Hear me now! **WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE!** It is grace that opens our eyes to see our sin and our need of the living God who is made known to the world in Jesus the Christ, the bread of life, the one who , when we go to him he will never leave us hungry again. When invited we can turn to him and have our thirst quenched from a living stream.

Today is a day in which we will experience the bread of life at the Lord's table once more. It is also a day in which we celebrate another baptism. Shortly, Hanna Lyn Howarth will be baptized. She has done nothing to deserve this. God is choosing to come down and through the Holy Spirit and Water, God will claim her as part of his family. As a child of God Hanna will be granted God's grace as her parents, grandparents and other Christians have been for centuries. Baptism is like that. God chooses to initiate a relationship freely even when we cannot communicate for ourselves. He loves us unconditionally.

There is a cost to such unconditional love. Jesus came as the bread of life so that in his death and resurrection we might experience new life. Such a giving act and with the endless love of God we should take time to share God's love and our experience of it with others.

May the bread of life grant you his never-ending love and mercy. Amen.