

SCRIPTURE READING FOR FEBRUARY 13, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

John 6:35-59
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

³⁵ Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But I told you that you have seen me and STILL DON'T BELIEVE. ³⁷ Everyone whom the Father gives to me will come to me, and I won't send away anyone who comes to me. ³⁸ I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ This is the will of the one who sent me, that I won't lose anything he has given me, but I will raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ This is my Father's will: that all who see the Son and believe in him will have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

⁴¹ The JEWISH OPPOSITION grumbled about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

⁴² They asked, "Isn't this Jesus, Joseph's son, whose mother and father we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

⁴³ Jesus responded, "Don't grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless they are drawn to me by the Father who sent me, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ I assure you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ *Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and they died.* ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that whoever eats from it will never die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The gospel of John one of the four stories of the good news of Jesus (Gospel means good news) which tells his life, actions, words and mission. It's believed that John's account is the last one written as his retelling of the story reflects considerable theological reflection and uses metaphors and poetic language. One example is the play with light and darkness throughout the story. John's account also contains only seven miracles – or signs as they're called. A symbolic number in Jewish tradition that represents the divine and also recall the days of creation in the foundational story of Genesis.

Our reading today is the latter half of a long teaching that Jesus gives to a crowd which follows him across the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum to see and hear more. John 6:24-26 sets the context. The crowd asks for more miraculous signs in order to believe in Jesus and his authority. This is a major theme of the gospel as we've already seen in:

⁹"The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. ¹⁰ The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, BUT THE WORLD DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THE LIGHT.

¹¹ THE LIGHT CAME TO HIS OWN PEOPLE, AND HIS OWN PEOPLE DIDN'T WELCOME HIM. ¹² But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children, ¹³ born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God." - John 1:9-13

⁴⁸ Jesus said to [the royal official whose son was sick, 'UNLESS YOU SEE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YOU WON'T BELIEVE.']" - John 4:48

⁴³ I [Jesus] have come in my Father's name, and YOU DON'T RECEIVE ME." - John 5:42

JEWISH OPPOSITION:: Throughout John's gospel, the author most often refers to the religious leaders in opposition to the teaching and movement of Jesus simply as "the Jews." Here the translators try to soften what has led to anti-Semitism over the years. By the time John writes his gospel the Followers of Jesus or Christians (first called the People of the Way) have been caste out of from the synagogue and a formal separation occurs between the synagogue and emerging church (around 80 CE) Some of John's bitterness appears in the gospel in the way that he lumps all Jews into the category of opposers of Jesus.

Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and they died.::

¹The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Sin desert...there they complained against Moses and Aaron in

down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵² Then the Jews debated among themselves, asking, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

⁵³ Jesus said to them, “I assure you, *unless you eat the flesh of the Human One and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. It isn’t like the bread your ancestors ate, and then they died. Whoever eats ~~his~~ bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Those listening to Jesus seem to misunderstand. They understand his words on a physical or literal level (like Nicodemus did in John 3 and the woman at the well in John 4) rather than on a wider more spiritual level. When and how do you struggle to understand the teachings of Jesus?
- Jesus talks about nourishing eternal life. Is that more about living forever or living differently?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

...the desert. ³ The Israelites said to them, ‘Oh, how we wish that the Lord had just put us to death while we were still in the land of Egypt. There we could sit by the pots cooking meat and eat our fill of bread. Instead, you’ve brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death.’

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I’m going to make bread rain down from the sky for you. The people will go out each day and gather just enough for that day.’” - Exodus 16:1-4, *the whole story goes to the end of the chapter.*

unless you eat the flesh of the Human One and drink his blood, you have no life in you :: In the early years of the Church, Christians were persecuted vigorously by the Roman Empire. In justifying this persecution, the Romans made all sorts of charges against the Christian community. We learn from the second-century Christian apologists Justin Martyr and Athenagoras that the three main accusations levied against Christians were atheism, incest, and cannibalism. The charge of atheism came from their refusal to worship the Roman pantheon of “gods” (for more on this, see Justin Martyr’s First Apology [Chapter 5 & 6]). We also know the charge of incest originated from the Christian concept of being united as “one family in Christ”, which meant husbands and wives would refer to each other as “brothers and sisters in Christ.” To an outsider, this could easily come off the wrong way. The third charge, that of cannibalism, seems related to the eucharist (communion) to which our text today refers. The notion of eating the body and blood of Christ in a common meal seems to have been perceived as a cannibalistic communal meal. This was eventually even deformed through misinterpretation and portrayed among some Romans as a meal at which a child/baby was sacrificed and consumed. It seems shocking and yet we can see as we consider these rumors and condemnations of the Christians the great divide between understanding the words of Jesus literally and taking them seriously as metaphor or rich with deeper meaning.

~~his~~ bread :: We see the importance of bread as physical food and spiritual metaphor for life nourishment in the teaching of Jesus of how to pray “ Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us each day our daily bread. [Or our bread for tomorrow]” - Matthew 6:9-13