

## **Will We Take the Bread?**

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Trinity Church in the City of Boston  
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Jesus asks the twelve, “do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.” In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every time I go into a restaurant with friends or family, it doesn't matter who; I inevitably come up against a great moral dilemma. You see as the server comes to take our drink orders, there usually comes with him or her, a basket of warm steaming bread. Maybe it's a genetic predisposition of being an Italian-American, maybe its just an addiction to carbohydrates, it doesn't matter because I love it, all of it. But that's not the dilemma, you see the dilemma occurs after the basket has passed all the way around and there is one piece of bread left. Do I take the bread, or not? Do I get there faster than my friends or family who are with me? What do I do? Will I take the bread? I think I should.

This morning we come to the end of a five week long journey into the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. It began with the feeding of the five thousand; the next Sunday we celebrate the glorious transfiguration of Jesus and those moments that mark our own transfiguration. Followed by a deep look into the tragedy that lies behind the breaking of the bread, the breaking of Jesus for the world and how Jesus' own breaking has been misused to break the world around us. And last week we heard how when we take this bread from heaven, this bread of life, into our own flesh and blood, it changes us, it changes us irrevocably. And so this morning, another dilemma has arisen and I couldn't decide. Will I take this last piece of homiletical bread? I think I must.

As you remember the Gospel of John at its very beginning gives us a lens through which to see the entire Gospel. It's called the prologue and it goes like this. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things came into being through Him and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him was life and the life was the light of all people.” That prologue is the great Christian claim about Jesus of Nazareth. He isn't Moses, He isn't the prophet, He is the very Word of God that brought the whole universe into being. But what's interesting to me is that Jesus doesn't use this grand language about Himself very often. In fact when we meet Jesus in all of the Gospels, including John, He uses these very simple words. Very earthy metaphors to parlay to folks who He is and why He is there. But what happens is that as Jesus is teaching with these simple metaphors, it seems that things get more complicated for Him and people begin to lose track of what He is saying. And so finally Jesus sort of throws up His hands and returns to that prologue of John for words to describe His work and His mission. Out of sheer exasperation He says, “does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is

useless. And the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” Because of this many of His disciples turned back and no longer went about with Him.

Jesus used metaphorical language and called Himself the Bread of Life. Then He tells His audience to eat His flesh and drink His blood and they don't understand. They only have the law and their literalism and they've heard His metaphor and missed His meaning. Will they take the bread? They don't think they can.

And then comes Peter. God, thank you for Peter, so utterly human, that great juxtaposition of faith and doubt all rolled into one. He says some of the dumbest things in the Gospel and yet some of the most profound. Peter is like Jesus' Yogi Berra. John's Gospel says, “because of this many of His disciples turned back and no longer went about with Him. So Jesus asked the twelve, “do you also wish to go away?” And Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life.” It is Peter at his most profound. Jesus in His exasperation had turned on His own friends. And Peter says the words that I wish I could say. Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. Will Peter take the bread? He can do nothing else.

I wish that faith were as simple as it is in our text this morning. As Jesus offers Himself as the Bread of Life, the faithless disciples desert Him and those that believe say there is nowhere else to go. It's an either or, it's cut and dry. But the world of faith that I live in seems so much more complicated. The teachings of this Jesus are anything but easy and so we say our prayers, we listen to sermons, and we sing our hymns. And for some of us Jesus is a great teacher and a moral exemplar. And for others He is nothing less than the incarnate Word of God, God made flesh. And for others of us, we hover between here and there, week in, week out, Sunday to Sunday, yet here we are, together. Gathered from places near and places far, traditions far and wide, something has compelled us to enter this place on a summer Sunday morning. We want to hear words of eternal life. And so we ask that question, to whom can we go? Because we all know we can't go out there, to that world. What hope is there out there of a life beyond the inevitable end to which we all will come. We won't find it in the promises of marketing gurus or pharmaceutical firms, any politician or the 24-hour news cycle. The life that lies beyond these walls is finite and that's what beckons us to return every Sunday. No matter what state our faith is in. What beckons us to gather in this place is the promise of a possibility of more. This is our dilemma and yet this is the promise that Jesus offers, bread, bread for a life eternal. Bread that will never end. Will we take that bread together? I think we must.