

St. David's Presbyterian Church
St. John's, NL
"Lessons from the Baker and the Neighbour"
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August 5, 2012
10th Sunday after Pentecost

How many people love the smell of fresh bread baking, or just out of the oven? I'm not sure if there is any other scent that speaks of "home" to so many people. I suppose that's why they line up at the Georgetown bakery on Saturday mornings, out of the store and into the street, which is lovely on a warm Summer day. There's something about the smell that brings even greater anticipation to the taste. Once the taste is satisfied, however, you move on, or simply want more.

Jesus uses this anticipated taste as he talks to those who were pursuing him in isolated places. He cuts through their surface questions about what manner of transportation he used to get where he was and directly addressed their motivation for being there. So let me do the same this morning. Why are you here? Is it because it's something you do regularly and has become a habit? Is it because you enjoy the music, or you have some friends here? Is it because you know it is the right thing to do and you choose to do the right thing on Sunday mornings? Is it because you have nothing better to do? Is it because you want to meet with God? Is it because you want give yourself more fully to Jesus Christ and his desires for our community and our lives? Perhaps it is all or some of the above. Perhaps there is some other reason you are here. May I suggest it is imperative you know why you are coming, what public worship means to you.

I can tell you why I think you should be here, but only you can tell me why you really are here, and even that needs to be revealed to you by God. We usually have multiple motivations for what we do. It would be good to list as many reasons as possible for why you come. So there's your homework for next week.

In John 6, Jesus cuts to the real reason he thought people were so motivated to follow him. He was able to feed them an all you can eat buffet. He said it was as simple as that. They weren't even really interested in the miracles, it was the full stomachs they wanted. Which poses the question, what is more interesting to us, Sunday worship or Sunday dinner? Which one do we look forward to with real anticipation?

So Jesus realigns our quests. He says we need to work for real, enduring bread, not that stuff we put in our mouths. And people ask what kind of work he is talking about. So he tells them.

The real work is believing and trusting Jesus. "Yeah, yeah," the people say. "Prove who you are." "Show us a miracle."

And as a listener, I can hardly believe my ears. Because these are the same people who saw ten thousand others eat as much as they wanted, (and saw at least a dozen baskets of fish bones left over) just a short while ago. So what's going on? Are they really asking Jesus to show them another miracle? The Gospel of John clearly presents Jesus as the God-man who presents people with miracle after miracle, but it's not about the miracles, and Jesus says this. He leads them back to the Scriptures.

They know the story of the manna coming from heaven that feeds the hundreds of thousands of people in the desert for forty years after they came out of Egypt. Jesus reminds them that it wasn't Moses who fed them. He led them but never fed them. It was God, Jesus' Father, who fed them. He is the one who has the bread that brings life.

And the people say, "Yeah, yeah, we want that bread. Give us that bread." And instead of feeding them as he did with the loaves and fishes, he teaches them that he is the bread that comes down from heaven that brings life. Jesus is the fulfillment of the story and the sign of the manna. He is the "what is it?" (what the word "manna" means) that fulfills our common human yearning for meaning and life understanding. He is the food that endures. Tasting of what he has to offer gives us more hunger and thirst for righteousness, not less. Yet to know Jesus is to know satisfaction, because he is the Author of life, he is the key to life meaning. He opens the locks of our questions and concerns. Every answer may not be given, but he satisfies our hearts' longings.

So what is Jesus saying to you this morning? What is the longing in your life that he can satisfy? Is it finding peace within? Is it knowing your part in this human existence that you currently cannot figure out at all? Is it receiving the desire of your heart to change positively where you have failed to change yourself? Is it simply connecting to the One who is the glue that holds the universe together?

Jesus speaks to us as a master baker, addressing our core issues and questions, speaking to our hunger, giving us the bread of life. Every other bread will be digested and leave us. He will not.

Sometimes we think we can take a vacation from God. It's rarely or never that we say to God that He should stay at home while we go on our trip, or do our work, or recreation or activity. But that's what happens, whether we say it to the Lord or not.

King David's story is such a story. As we learned last week, he wasn't doing what God called him to do as king, but was at home creeping the neighborhood. He found a beautiful woman and had sex with her, trying to cover it up with her husband, then simply killing him to cover up the secret, because she was pregnant. We intellectually know that there are no secrets from God. But in practice we often hide from God and one another.

This is the story about a man very close to God sinning and rebelling against God in a spectacular way. David had won God's heart, not by killing, nor by bravery in one to one battle with Goliath. I believe he won God's heart by worshipping God. He devoted his musical skills to the Lord and developed a deep and abiding relationship with God. He wasn't perfect. And just like Adam and Eve (and all the rest of us), after he sinned, he went to great lengths to cover up that sin.

So God sent someone to him to reveal his sin. Just as an aside here, I think God sends people into our lives as well to expose our sins, just in case we think we don't need God or that we don't sin and hurt others and the Lord. The person God sends in David's life, is the prophet Nathan. His name means "gift." We might not feel that someone who reveals our sins is a gift, but they are, particularly as they are sent from God. Nathan reveals David's sin in a way that he can most understand.

He tells a story about two neighbors. One is rich, the other poor. One has multiple properties, a huge number of flocks and sheep. The poor one has only one little ewe that he can barely feed, but takes care of it like his own child.

The rich neighbor receives a guest, but instead of taking one of his hundreds of sheep, he decides to take his poor neighbor's, who probably works for him. Whether it is his right to do so, we don't know. We just know it isn't

right. David, who spent so many years taking care of sheep, particularly understands how heinous this crime is. Upon hearing this story, he immediately lists the number of punishments that should be levied against the rich neighbor. Of course, Nathan tells him that he is the rich neighbor. God explains through Nathan that David will now know violence through his family line, particularly his sons, will try to kill each other and one son will have sex with his other wives publicly in the future when he tries to take away the throne from his father. This is Absalom. His story comes later.

God sets out the punishment in line with the crime. David had used violence to try to solve the problem of covering up his sin. Now he would see the same sin in his sons. And isn't true that we can often see our own sins coming through our children? We don't like to admit it, but we pass on the good and the bad to our children, even if we don't want to.

The meaning of this story is that we are encouraged to confess our sins quickly and to turn from our sins, rather than hiding them or trying to hide them with more sinning, whether lies or violence, secrecy or manipulation or anything else.

God wants us to be honest and open with God and with each other.

As we are open and honest, we can learn from both the baker and the neighbor.

Let us pray.