

Kimberly O'Brien – 8/8/2021 Preaching John 6:35, 41-51 also Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Sometimes Jesus is so annoying

We are in the midst of the Gospel of John's discourse on the Bread of Life

It began a couple of weeks ago when Pastor Ellen read about the miracle of the loaves and fish feeding 5,000 people

Everyone is in awe of witnessing this incredible miracle

Jesus has them in a really good place

He captured their attention in a big way

They suspect something incredible is going on

They seek him out, track him down, and really are curious

They engage him, wanting to understand what's going on

And then he blows it

He rambles on and on for three weeks in the lectionary about being living bread from heaven

I'm with the Jews on this one

They are feeling confused, frustrated, and they begin to complain

"Hey, we know you – we know your mom, we know your dad – what do you mean 'You came down from heaven'?!"

And then Jesus doubles down on being annoying

First, by telling them not to complain

And then by talking way over their heads about learning from the Father, coming to Jesus, hearing from the Father through Jesus...

Their one assurance,

Very truly

Is that Jesus is the bread of life.

I think that the reading from Ephesians offers us more information that seems actually helpful

We are given instructions that we can apply... like

Speak the truth

Don't make room for evil

Lift one another up

Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving

Why didn't Jesus "very truly" speak more directly like this?

I wonder about the message he's sending us through this twisted discourse

I see the closest connection between Ephesians and John when I read in Ephesians:

"We are members of one another" and

Give yourself to one another like Christ is given to us

I think Jesus is being annoying on purpose

Because there are no easy answers to the incarnation of Christ in the world

There are no universal solutions to living into God's presence within YOU

There are no easy answers for the disciples or the Jews –

Or for us –

When we're asking about who God is and how God works and where God is found

Even after the obvious presence of a miracle of God through the feeding of 5,000

God can't be pinned down

God is on the move, flowing in and out of everyone, everywhere, always

If we allow God

This whole chapter causes me to think about the Lord's Supper

I think sometimes we hear the words and do the thing so often that it's hard to grasp its significance

Every week, and again in just a few minutes we will hear the words:

Our Lord **Jesus took bread**, and gave thanks; **broke it**, and **gave it** to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. **Do this** for the remembrance of me.

The way Jesus talks around things I doubt "do this" is literally get the bread and share it

I wonder if Jesus is inviting us, our very selves

To be taken

Broken open

And given

In remembrance of him

We are taken into Christ through baptism

We are broken open in so many ways

We are given to one another in community

I want to be specific about how I think about being broken open

This isn't a breaking down of oneself

This isn't admitting to sinfulness and therefore brokenness

God doesn't call us to be broken **down** by the world

No

God invites us to be broken **open** to the world

God calls us to recognize Godself within our soul

And crack through the layers of ego that have buried Godself so deep inside of us

And break open our true self

Revealing the incarnation of God in US

This sounds beautiful and lovely in theory

But there are no turn by turn directions for being broken and shared

And Jesus doesn't try to give us directions

He gives us a promise

Because cracking through our outer protective layer to reveal our true self is scary

Being broken and shared feels incredibly vulnerable and can be emotionally painful!

I don't want to do it!

Jesus promises that if we go for it

Then we will truly live

If we let go

God will be with us so obviously

Life will be more incredible than we imagine!

Sometimes Jesus is so annoying

Especially when everything within my being resists what he's trying to tell me

Especially when I'm trying to be tough

And smart

And look like I've got myself together

I don't want to be baptized into being broken and shared!

I'd rather be baptized into comfort and wholeness

And this is the miracle God does within us

Like the feeding of the 5,000

When we allow ourselves to be broken open

And shared with one another

God makes us whole

God makes **us** whole

And **them** whole

And **wholeness** is God's miracle

Sometimes Jesus is so annoying

We'll get another week of his unclear "very truly" explanations

God is asking us to really sit with this one

Like maybe it's really important

Like maybe it's getting to the core of being Christian

It's so important we'll spend half of the summer wrestling with it

Jesus doesn't offer a clear answer for us

I sure don't have an answer for us

So I pray,

may Jesus the Christ,

allow us to sense the unique gifts God has placed within each one of us.

May that sensing be a sign,

may our wondering be a guide,

may Jesus' promise be an inspiration,

and may we have the audacity and courage to allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

Within that vulnerability may we be broken open,

so that all of our insecurities,

and doubts  
held up by our egos,  
fall away to reveal God's incarnation inside us.  
May we be bold  
in our belief in abundance  
to give ourselves to one another in community,  
and may we celebrate the wholeness  
that this broken and shared living brings.  
Amen