

Sermon: Bread of Life
12 Pentecost, Year B
John 6:35, 41-51

August 12, 2018
Emmanuel Church, Staunton
Shelby Ochs Owen

(Invite children forward, as it is the combined children's and adult sermon)

Do you like to eat bread? What is your favorite kind of bread? Can you think of breads that are baked in other countries? (Croissants, Naan, Tortillas, Pita) When I was in England we ate some bread called Yorkshire Pudding that was delicious and puffed up with air in it. Do you ever eat bread here at Emmanuel? When is that?

In our reading from the John's Gospel in our Bible from today, Jesus mentions bread seven times! And two of those times he said to the group he was with, "I am the bread of life." Why do you think he said this? In Jesus' time bread was a staple in their diet; in other words bread was served at most meals, so it was important. Usually the woman of the home took the grain, ground it, made flour, then she added oil, water and yeast, and baked the bread. It took a good amount of time and it was a lot of work! And she had to do it every day, maybe not on the Sabbath.

Hebrew word for bread: **lechem**; Bethlehem means "House of Bread". This word for Bread was often used for food in general. So it is essential. We know that bread is nourishing, and delicious, important and helps us stay alive. It is essential. Jesus is essential, too.

When Jesus said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," the religious leaders started complaining and criticizing him. And you know what he did when they started whining about him? He told them to knock it off! And he reminded them that God is the one that sent Jesus to us. And if we believe in Jesus, we give our *whole* lives over to him, and learn to love people the way Jesus loves people. And because God's love never ends, we will always be loved by God. So Jesus then ignored what the people criticizing him were saying and went right back to what he knew to be the right thing. He didn't let them distract him from getting back to what he was there to do, which was to teach them and us how to love.

But just as we need to eat every day, we need Jesus' help every day to steer us in that direction of love. We can get off track pretty easily. Sometimes even before we even get home from church, we've said something not so nice to a family member. If Jesus is the bread of life and wants us to be the bread in the world how are we to behave? We say "No!" to the hatred and "Yes!" to love. We treat all people, whatever their skin color or their religion with kindness, with fairness, with respect, with a big heart. And when the ugly side of life appears, we say there is a better way, the way of Jesus, the way of love.

Today at communion, we will have bread that Edwin O'Shea made with flour and oil and water and yeast, a lot like the bread of Jesus' time. And instead of us coming up to the altar rail, we will gather in a big circle and give a little piece of the bread to each other to remind us that we can all bring the love of Jesus to any situation we find ourselves in.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Just like regular food, Jesus is essential to our well-being, God's unconditional love. May this bread nourish us, delight us and sustain us.

Amen.