

## **Sermon**

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**St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, NM**

**1 August 2021**

**John 6:24-35**

**It's All About the Bread**

Good morning, friends. I hate to be the bearer of bad news. It's difficult to start out a sermon with this statement, but let's be strong together. I've got something to tell you.

It's NOT about you.

I love and value each one of you as a beloved child of God, but....

It's NOT about you.

Instead, it's all about the bread.

It's not about you. It's all about the bread.

In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." We are Christians because we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. We believe Christ died for our sins. Jesus is the Bread of Life.

Therefore, it is all about the bread.

And in the gospel lesson for the next few weeks, we are going to be hearing more and more and more about that bread. Because, you see, it's all about the bread.

Even in the Old Testament lesson this morning we heard about bread. The Israelites have escaped Egypt for the Promised Land. With God's help they have outsmarted Pharaoh's army and are no longer be chased, *but* they have no food. The people are complaining to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food. They go so far as to say they'd rather be slaves back in Egypt than to die of hunger out in the desert.

God hears the complaints of the people and gives them food – manna from heaven – to eat. Even when it's given to them, the people aren't sure what's going on. "What is this stuff?" they ask. It's doesn't look any bread they've seen before. Moses must tell them "This is the bread God has given you to eat."

It's all about the bread. It isn't about you, your complaints, and your questions. It's all about the bread.

In today's Gospel lesson we pick up right where we left off last week. Jesus has fed 5,000 people with the lunch a small child had shared – 5 small loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Jesus hightailed it out of the area after the meal when he realized the people were demanding more of him.

But the people weren't satisfied. They got in their own boats and went to Capernaum and found Jesus. They were amazed at the miracle the previous day and wanted more. They said they wanted proof and understanding of who Jesus was, but Jesus suspected they simply wanted another free lunch.

Jesus explains the food they are seeking is only of the moment. Eat it and you'll get hungry again. But Jesus is there to tell them about food that will satisfy them forever. The people are even more intrigued. Where can they find this bread...the bread that will allow them never to be hungry again?

Jesus replies, "I am the bread of Life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. Believe in me and you'll never be thirsty."

It's not about you, what you want, your curiosity, and your physical needs, says Jesus. It's all about the bread.

The Israelites in the desert thought it was all about them and their hunger – so they complained about it. The people following Jesus thought it was all about them and what physical things they could get from Jesus. But in both cases it was all about the bread.

Do we have the same problem? Do we make things all about us, our needs, our desires, our opinions?

Do we forget the very reason we are here....in church...on earth?

Do we think it's all about us?

I am here to tell you today.... It's all about the bread

Our society - our culture - seems to have drifted into the "Me! Me! Me!" phase of existence. If I want something, I should have it and I should have it now. If I have a thought, I should share it right now. If I have an opinion, I should share it immediately on social media because, well, I can, and everyone else will be enthralled with my thoughts and ideas and, if my calculations are correct, will immediately agree with me.

But this kind of thinking – putting your desires, ideas, and opinions ahead of everyone else....

The concept of thinking you're always right and anyone who disagrees with you is wrong....

Not listening or caring about the needs and concerns of anyone else...

It the exact opposite of what Jesus teaches us.

It's not about you.

As I was thinking about what I was going to say this week, Simone Biles withdrew from participating with the United States Women's gymnastics team at the Olympics in Tokyo.

The comments about this action were swift and polarizing. The thing I found interesting is that people around the world were weighing in on a matter about which they knew nothing. All that mattered was what THEY thought about Ms. Biles' actions. She was a hero. She was a coward. She was helping her team. She was a traitor. She was a human being. She was a quitter.

Everyone was an expert and made the situation all about them – what they thought and what they needed from the situation.

Here's the tricky part of this story, though. In this case, it actually was all about Simone Biles. She had to do what was in her own best interests. Because she had to do what was best for her, in order to do what was best for everyone else in the future. You don't have to approve of her decision – and it doesn't matter because it has nothing to do with you. But Jesus, the bread of life, calls us to respect and be compassionate with someone going through a difficult time.

It's all about the bread. It isn't about you.

In our second lesson today, Paul writes a letter to the young church in Ephesus. He tells them the best way to grow and become strong in Christ.

Paul begs his friends – begs them - to be humble, gentle, patient, bear each other in love, and maintain the unity of the Spirit in a bond of peace.

It's difficult to be humble, gentle, patient, bear one another in love, and maintain UNITY when you're only concerned with your own needs, thoughts, and ideas.

Paul continues his advice by reminding his friends there is ONE body, ONE Spirit, ONE hope, ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God of all.

We all are all part of ONE body – the body of Christ, the body of the church

There is ONE body – and that body is the body of Christ; the bread in which we partake every week. And as Jesus tells us in the Gospel this week – *HE* is that bread.

It's all about the bread.

We are living in strange days, my friends. There are people telling us to go back to be extra cautious because the Corona virus is returning in a new form. There are people telling us that they will do what they want because it's matter of personal freedom and personal choice. In other words, it's all about them.

No matter your opinion on the matter, I am here to tell you that life is never going to be the same as it was before March of 2020. Church is not ever going to be exactly the way it was before. We've been forced to make changes in our worship and it has changed how we bring God to the

world around us. There are now people who worship with us every week in El Paso, Austin, Florida, Indianapolis, and Michigan. There are people who live here in Albuquerque who have never been in this building but join us for worship and classes and discussions.

We are reaching more people with God's message of love and acceptance than we ever dreamed possible. In 18 months, we have changed the way we share the Good News of Jesus with the world. The train has left the station. We were called to get on that train and we did. And we are now called to keep riding that train even though we aren't exactly sure where it is going.

And let me tell you, that train seems to be going at an extreme rate of speed.

It's scary. And some of the accommodations on that train aren't exactly what we had in mind or to our liking.

But we are called to continue this journey with Jesus on this train. And I can't imagine better traveling companions on this journey than with all of you, my friends in Christ.

You know why? Because we know it isn't about us. It's all about the bread.

It's all about listening to the bread.

It's all about following the bread.

It's all about partaking of the bread.

It's all about sharing the bread.

It's all about taking the bread out into the world.

It's all about the bread.