



Grain

“Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one’s own beliefs. Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.” –John F. Kennedy

Field

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... 41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. John 6:35, 41-45

Thoughts

Whenever I read, “the Jews” in scripture I try to remember to change it to “the authorities,” “the people,” or “those in power” unless we talk about the context. John was not part of the majority religion, and as was so often the case, whichever religion was in the minority be it Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Paganism, etc., it was an easy target for persecution. John shared the message about the bread of life through the lens of a vulnerable minority community.

In the Gospel reading, those grumbling were part of the same culture as those who weren’t. In the future, John’s way of separating Jewish followers of Jesus from Jewish people who did not, took on an anti-Semitic life in which scripture was misused to condone oppression. That was especially true in societies where Judaism was the minority religion in the face of persecuting Christians. If only we had a specific group of people whom we could rely on to be pure and blameless through history and another to establish as always villainous, past and current events would be easier to interpret, but we don’t. Details of which group misuses power to the detriment of another shift. When we refuse to notice those shifts, we miss prophetic, healing voices that tap into the ongoing current of God’s love. Jesus embodied that love and named it the bread of life.

We want to fixate on history focused on the persecution of the members from our own religion. There are Christians, especially among Christian Nationalists who even claim they experience religious persecution in the U.S. today, but where? In their efforts to “Christianize America” and create a theocracy, Christian Nationalists fight for a nation in which religious groups that are not Christian would experience intensified persecution.

As imperfect people, we need the bread of life to discern how God’s love is working in the present. That current of love continues to invite us however we experience bias or temptations to power. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy