



Grain

“When hope is not pinned wriggling onto a shiny image or expectation, it sometimes floats forth and opens.” –Anne Lamott

Field

⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. ⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.” ⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” John 6:56-69

Thoughts

We’ve heard a lot about bread in St. John’s Gospel for the past five weeks. Jesus fed a crowd with bread and fish but moved people to look beyond what they needed for physical sustenance to the living bread or bread of life, which Jesus referred to himself as being. This week, bread is about Jesus’ flesh and becomes too much for some to digest.

Many of the same individuals enthused about Jesus’ miracles, and perhaps were among those who tried to earlier turn him into a king, stepped back when hearing where Jesus was now heading with his bread talks. What was difficult about his new bread image? What was it like to hear Jesus tell people to eat his body and drink his blood for the first time? Did anyone think, “cannibalism?” But in this story, several of the disciples, who were accustomed to Jesus’ words pointing beyond literal meanings, were the ones offended.

Was it that faith boiled down to abiding, or trusting, in God that was challenging. But why? Jesus was shiny when performing miracles, even though the disciples knew that he wouldn’t wear a royal crown, own property, or possess a social list of VIPs. But was Christ and their path that ordinary, that undetermined by power in the world? No political protection, or positions accompanied the disciples’ engagement with God through Jesus. Any leftover hopes that Jesus’ spirituality would be conflated with a physical kingdom on this earth were dashed. There were just his body and blood and what was before the disciples in the ordinary. This was a turning point, when some fell away, and one was revealed to betray.

We would rather cling to a fixed image of Jesus or place for God to dwell as we cling to our positions, expectations, and grumblings. In modern history, the Nazis were extreme about insisting upon an Aryan superhero image in Jesus. That failed and, in the end, always will. How vulnerable it can be to trust in God above all things, but how freeing. Peter knew just how freeing: “Lord to whom can we go?” Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy