

Lectionary B August 9, 2015 Pentecost 11  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN  
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1 Kings 19:4-8  
Psalm 34:1-8  
Ephesians 4:25-5:2  
John 6:35, 41-51

### **Where Did You Say You Came From?**

There is a story about a little boy who came to his mother and asked, “Mom, where did I come from?” Oh, no, his mother was waiting for this question. He is asking the question so it is time for her to sit down with him and explain to him about the birds and the bees. She was ready. She got out that book she had to help her explain. After her long explanation about the facts of life she looked at her little son and asked, “That is where you came from, do you have any questions?” The little guy responded, “Uh, no, I just wanted to know ‘cause Jimmy said he came from Detroit.”

Confusion. They were talking about two different things. And that is where the confusion is coming from at the beginning of the Gospel. This time it’s the Jewish leaders who are confused by Jesus. All this healing and miracle work, like feeding a humongous bunch of people with a little boy’s lunch is one thing, but now this Jesus is going too far. *“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’?”* “We know this guy. We know where he came from, Nazareth, not heaven!”

That is the real problem the Jews had in this scripture reading. “Who does he think he is, God?”

Well, yes, as a matter of fact that is exactly what Jesus is telling them and that is the crux of their confusion and the source of their anger. “We will eat the miracle fish and loaves and drink that amazing wine the guy made from water, but don’t let him be claiming he is the “bread of life that came down from heaven.” Because that would just plain change their lives more than they could handle.

One pastor on a preaching blog I read this week put it this way, *“Jesus offers the world the bread of life and suddenly they have all gone gluten free. We don’t ever seem to be ready for what God offers.”*

Jesus is saying he is like manna, bread from heaven to feed and nourish all of God’s children. Jesus is saying this Bread of life that came down from heaven is the food that satisfies us throughout eternity. Jesus is saying it is up to God to feed us this bread. In fact, our very faith is up to God. *“No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me...”*

That is the part that upsets the Jews. If what Jesus is saying is true, then our power is gone. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot initiate this relationship with God. We cannot come to God, we cannot “find Jesus” like some say, until God first “comes down from heaven to us.” This gift of Bread of life that comes down from heaven is an unconditional gift solely from God. And that

means we cannot say who gets it and who doesn't. Our power to control is gone. And that didn't sit well with the Jews who were leaders at the synagogue.

Listen carefully to what Jesus is saying here, *"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. 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."*

"They shall ALL be taught by God..," This is wholly inclusive. God sent Jesus, the bread of life that comes down from heaven, completely God and completely a plain flesh and blood human, to raise all God's children up on the last day. We don't have the power to say who has eternal life and who doesn't. It is not up to us to even save ourselves. This is all up to God.

This week I my email to the congregation, in preparation for this Sunday, I asked everyone a question, *Do we find it a little disturbing, or even threatening, that our faith -- being drawn to Jesus -- is ultimately up to God? Or we do find that a promise and comfort? Why?*

Well, if it is all up to God then that takes away any chances of any of us working harder to earn God's favor. No one can be a better Christian than someone else. Jesus said in our text last week that the only work we can do is to believe and that belief or faith is a gift from God. Martin Luther said, *"Your faith comes from God, not from you. And everything that works faith within you comes from God not from you."* That pretty much means we are nothing without God. So Luther goes on, *"God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a [person] is nothing, God can make nothing out of him [or her]."*

Is that disturbing or threatening? Could be. Why we are little blobs of flesh in the palm of God's hand. We have no power to climb the ladder or better ourselves without God's gift of the bread of life. All we can do is cling to God.

But think about that. What a comforting picture, all of us cradled in God's big strong hand, holding on for dear life. There is no better place to be. And this is all God's doing. We cannot lose, because our mistakes cannot separate us from God's loving hold on all of us.

One person answered my question this way, *"When I first read the question, I wasn't sure how I felt. Now that I've thought about it and read all of the readings for tomorrow, I find it could not be any other way. I have always thought God was number 1 no matter what. I see Jesus as sent because we needed a "human" to teach us and be God on earth. Does that make sense?"*

It is the only thing that does make sense. Jesus says it all, *"This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

Today is a wonderful day. We are witnessing God's gift this morning as six children of God are baptized into this promised inheritance. As the Simpson family comes forward we will all remember our baptisms. This is God's plan—joining us together as a community of faith nourished by the body and blood of Jesus to be the Body of Christ in the world. Remember

God's promise? *"They shall ALL be taught by God."* Jesus came down from heaven as a human from the town of Nazareth to teach us all and feed us this bread from heaven.

This is not up to us. We don't have to worry about how or who or when. Our simple response is to cling to God's big strong hand and in Paul's words from our Ephesians text, *'Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.'*

All I can say is, "Praise God for this gift—the bread of life that comes down from heaven!" That's where we come from. Amen.