

Good Sunday morning from a cloudy hill in Maine.....

For those of you joining me in church this morning – here’s the question I’d like you to think about and, if you are willing, to share with us this morning in our sermon time: What are the passages of the Bible that are most nourishing to you? If no biblical passages come to mind, what other sources of sacred nourishment are important to you?

O.K., there's the very brief "words" for this morning! Hoping to see many of you in the pews in a few hours. But for those of you unable to be with us, near by or far away, know that you are in my heart and mind each day, as we walk this path together, arm in arm, in spirit, if not in body..... And here are a few quotes to ponder this second Sunday of August....

*Abraham Joshua Heschel, 20th century* -- "When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people."

*The Dalai Lama, 21st century* -- "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible to be kind."

*Jean Baptiste Lacordaire, 19th century* -- "We are leaves of one branch, the drops of one sea, the flowers of one garden."

*Stanley Hauerwas, 21st century* -- "Saints cannot exist without a community, as they require, like all of us, nurturance by a people who, while often unfaithful, preserve the habits necessary to learn the story of God."

*Wendell Berry, 20th century* -- "Healing is impossible in loneliness; it is the opposite of loneliness. Conviviality is healing. To be healed we must come with all the other creatures to the feast of Creation."

*Dorothy Day, 20th century* -- "We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

**"And they shall all be taught by God"**  
**A Sermon/Conversation for the Federated Church of Thomaston**  
**Sunday, August 8, 2021**  
**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**  
**Scripture: John 6:35, 41-51**

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." ....

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 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?' Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. 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. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 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."

John 6:35, 41-

51

Will you pray with me. Holy God, giver of life, conqueror of death, and guardian of all that happens in between, help us to understand what it means to be nourished with the bread of heaven. Teach us your recipe, that we might taste your presence in each one of our lives this day. Amen.

This isn't the sermon I was planning to deliver this morning. What I was planning to offer was just too esoteric and wordy, too distant and unrelated to this day. To be honest, it was boring.... and if a sermon is boring to me, I imagine it would be boring to you, too. So this morning, I would like us to have more of a conversation/sermon than my delivering a sermon to you.

If I'd known I was going to do this this morning, I would have given you homework last Sunday so you could be prepared to answer my question. But.... a lot happened to me and my brother and Nance in the last week, and I didn't know I was going to ask you this question. So here it is – what are the passages of the Bible that are most nourishing to you? In other words, how has the “bread of heaven” come into your life? I'll remind you of a few of my favorite passages, but first I'd like to know what passages are important to you.....

Here are the responses to my question above from this morning in our service from a number of our parishioners:

Matthew 7:12 – “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

“And it came to pass....” (look for it in the Gospel of Matthew or Luke!)

John 15:12 – “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Psalm 118:24 – “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

“I give to all through him who gives me strength.” (look for it!)

Exodus 20:12 – “Honor your father and your mother....”

All of the Psalms for their focus on nature and music....

And from one of my readers early this morning who couldn't join us for church: Philippians 4:5-7 – “Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Our text from the Gospel of John this morning speaks of Jesus as the “bread of life.” Verse 35 of Chapter 6 of John's Gospel says, “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.” Jesus was a Jew, born and raised in the Jewish faith, a teacher and preacher of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament to us. There was no *New Testament* in Jesus' time. Those writings came about at least twenty to eighty years after Jesus was crucified.

The passages of the Bible that are most important to me come from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. First from Genesis, the first book of the Bible, “And God remembered Noah.” In some translations the text reads, “But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:8) God “remembered” Noah.... Even after all the wickedness of human kind in the beginning.... God remembered Noah.... and so I believe God remembers us, too, even when we are not so good and loving and kind as we ought to be.

From the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 50, Verse 4, “The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning God wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.” I am both teacher and learner. If I ever forget that fact, I'm lost. If I don't continue to listen and learn – from you, from my life circumstances – how can I ever teach anything of worth?

From Psalm 16, Verse 6, “The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.” No matter the struggles I've had, the

losses I've felt and endured, I know I am one of the most fortunate people alive. The boundary lines of my life have given me comfort and protection always. My family heritage includes two who were ministers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and one who was named Martin Luther Daniels. I have a goodly heritage.

From the New Testament, 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1, Verse 3-4, "Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those with any affliction with the comfort with which we are comforted by God." God gives me comfort and so, I am to give comfort to others. This is why at the age of 47 I began seminary so that I might learn how best to give to others that comfort that I have received. My mother was all comfort to me. She has always been and always will be my best teacher of how to give comfort to others. She was God's "stand in" for me for the first 45 years of my life until her death in 1993. She continues to "stand in" for God for me as I turn 73 this month.

And you know of this passage as I have preached from it often, Hebrews 11, Verses 1 through 3, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things not visible." I don't need to "see" God to believe in God. I don't need to have a guarantee that what I hope for most will come true. I only need the assurance that all things are possible with God.

There are lots more passages of the Bible that are meaningful to me, but these five are the foundation of my faith. These are the bread of sacred sustenance, the "bread of life," "the bread come down from heaven," that I eat every day. What sacred sustenance nourishes you? What is the foundation of *your* faith?

Let the people say, "Amen."

**Federated Church in Thomaston**  
**United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church**  
**All Are Welcome**  
**Sunday, August 8, 2021**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director

Lector: Margie Kinney

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.*

*An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

## **GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** Arioso (Melody) -- J. S. Bach

### **Call to Worship**

Leader: We are the children of God the Creator.

**People: We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus, Redeemer.**

Leader: We are friends of the Spirit, Reconciler.

**All: We are kin with Earth that sustains us. We are family, one to another, we are the church. Let us worship God!**

**\*Opening Hymn** "Morning Has Broken" 29 red

**An Invocation....**

**A Responsive Reading** Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (see insert)

**A Moment of Silence**

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading** John 6:35, 41-51

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Message** "And they shall all be taught" Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

**\*Hymn of Meditation** "Abide With Me" 284 red

## **RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord's Prayer.....**

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts**

as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

**Offertory** Lord I want to be a Christian! -- Based on a spiritual

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**\*Closing Hymn** "Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise" 21 red

**Benediction**

**Postlude** Break Forth into Joy -- Calub Simper, arr by Carl F. Mueller

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, August 15, 2021**

**Proverbs 9:1-6; Psalm 34:9-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58**

**A thought from William Willimon, United Methodist Bishop, preacher and theologian:**

*"Today's gospel is a reminder that the Christian faith is more than a set of beliefs, a list of intellectual propositions. It is a matter of being encountered by a person, Jesus, a matter of God getting personal with us, engaging us, taking over our lives, possessing us.... We are moved to intellectual ascent much more through our imagination than through our intellect. And other people are crucial toward the stroking, funding, and fueling of our imagination."*

**Prayer List**

**Hold** in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... **And** all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... **And** all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... **And** add a prayer for Tammy Whirly, a friend of Margie's, dealing with cancer challenges, and, from Blair, prayers for her friend Judith on the passing of her daughter, Lani, 42, from brain cancer, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, **and** continued deep prayers for Hank and Lucy as Hank endures his cancer journey with the help of Hospice, **and** continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for "Cody," who doesn't live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O'Neal, Jo Ann Parker's daughter, who will be having brain surgery; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Fred Bagnall, Harriet Williams, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Sally Harjula Elliot, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, Doug and BJ Thomson, Heather Van Buskirk, and **Gail and the rest of the family of Michael in southern Maine who died this past week.... and Joanne Parker's daughter** *Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com) to add or drop the names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She's always glad to have a chat with you!*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Tuesday-8/10/21.....5:00-7:00 pm: Weight  
Watchers

Sunday-8/15/21.....9:30

am: Worship Service .....10:30

am: Coffee Hour...Please Join Us

Suggested Food Pantry

Donation..... Rice

The flowers this week are given by Sandra and Lou Caron in loving memory of their son, Jeffrey Caron.

Reminders for next Sunday,  
8/15/21

Greeter/Usher: Arlene Woodman  
Coffee Host: Alice and Dave  
Billheimer

Lector: Arlene  
Woodman

Flowers: Karen Wincapaw

Collection Total for Sunday, August 1, 2021:

Pledges - \$ 2241.00

Loose - \$ 44.00

Deacon's Sunday -

\$ 22.17

Total - \$ 2307.17

The 2021 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.