**The Bread of Life**

 **I’m going on a small rant this morning. Every time I read the words, “The Jews,” in The Gospel according to John, I cringe. Jesus was a Jew, and so too were all of his disciples and most of his followers. There was no such thing called Christianity when Jesus walked the earth. There were no identified Christians. Yet seventy years after Jesus rose from the dead, whoever wrote the Gospel of John separated out “The Jews” from Jesus. We all know how many Jews have been persecuted and killed throughout the ages. One of the reasons for so much persecution and slaughter had to be the references to “The Jews” in the Gospel of John.**

 **I wish John had used a term like some of the people rather than “The Jews” or he could have used the terms Sadducees and Pharisees. His Gospel sometime gave the impression that “The Jews” were against Jesus, when in fact not even all the Sadducees and Pharisees were against Jesus and his teachings. Terms declaring an entire people suspect, or wrong or evil always cause me trouble. The hackles on my back are raised every time I hear of one whole group or class of people being described as suspect for all sorts of wrongs. No one group of people should be made the scapegoats for the trespasses of a few of us. No one person should be classified by race or religion or gender orientation. So I have trouble with John’s words when he signaled out a group he referred to as “The Jews.” Okay this is the end of my rant, and goodness knows John wrote many beautiful words especially about signs and symbols and one of my favorite sayings from the Gospel of John is, “Come and see.”**

 **In today’s Gospel Jesus again proclaims himself to be the bread of life. I talked a great deal last week about how we might meditate on the consecrated host as the bread of life. Today I want to walk out into the world around us and explore how the bread of life is being manifest in many different ways. In my own mind I can’t separate the term the bread of life from another metaphor Jesus gave us to remember him by; he called himself the Light of the world. For me light is always part of the wonder of Jesus as the bread of life.**

 **All of us experience troubles and doubts and fears as we travel along our paths. Sometimes stumbling and falling along the way. You all know John and I are walking through his difficult recovery from cancer. At times John’s struggle seems daunting and overwhelming and there is only one reality that sustains us through the shadows of fear, and that is the Light of the World, the bread of Life. Come and see the everyday process of finding the bread of life in the simple acts of each day. Come and see the light of the world as the sun shines on the earth in great patches of brilliant light. Come and see the Holy Spirit and the bread of life causing the wind to ripple through the trees. Come and see the beauty held in the life of a single flower.**

 **You don’t have to carry big signs or stand on street corners or go door to door handing out pamphlets to have people see the bread of life, the light of the world within each of us. I’ve told this story to a few of you and it’s worth repeating. The Mayo Clinic is located in Rochester, MN, and appears to have a lot of Muslim people living and working at the Clinic and stores serving the town and its people. I was in a grocery store and a young Muslim woman was pushing a heavy cart of produce. She looked very unhappy and her face wore a deep scowl. I looked at her for a while and almost looked away. Then I decided to simply smile at her. Her whole countenance changed as she smiled back at me. It was as if a dark cloud had been lifted from her shoulders, and she seemed to walk with a lighter step as she continued to push her heavy load of produce. It was the most remarkable transformation I’ve ever seen. Such is the power of the bread of life when we take the time to let it shine out of us.**

 **One of our sons was with us at the Mayo Clinic on the day of his Dad’s surgery. He asked me, “Why are you talking with strangers and smiling at them?” I told him I saw it as part of my priesthood. We were in a town with many sick people, and none of us ever realize how much a simple act of kindness can mean to another human being. We are all called to take the time and do simple acts of kindness for one another. We are all called to say in as many simple ways as we can, come and see. Come and see the Christ in me want to meet the Christ in you. Come and see the bread of life abiding in me, waiting to see the bread of life abiding in you.**

 **There are so many global problems. I don’t have to list them, you all know them. Yet if we keep our eye focused on the sparrow sitting in our front yard, if we keep our minds focused on the everyday rather than on the grand picture of the worries of the world, we can and we do make a difference. Throughout this sermon I hope you’ve been wondering why the colorful little wand is hanging from this lectionary. It has been hanging on the frame of a picture for many years, most of the time I don’t even see it or think about it. But while I stood in the room where it hangs my attention was drawn to the little wand. I picked it up and held it up to the light. Then I remembered why I bought it. When the wand is held up to the light, it causes the spectrum of light to become rainbow colors. For me it was as if the light of the world, the bread of life was telling me every imaginable color of the rainbow is part of me and part of you. Every imaginable creature great and small is part of the bread of life and part of each one of us. There is no separation by race, creed, color, sexual orientation or any other false barrier between any of us. We are all part of the great light, the bread of life. Amen**