

Sermon – Thanksgiving Day

Church of The Redeemer

Preacher: Diego Garrido Barreto

Deuteronomy 26:1–11 John 6:25–35

More Bread Less Signs

Hola. Buenos dias, good morning neighbor Church of The Redeemer and good morning First Church in Chestnut Hill. My name is Diego and I serve as Ministerial Intern under the supervision of Rev. Mark Caggiano. I am a Colombian rooted in Catholicism, Methodism and a little bit of other faith traditions. I am doing my process of ordination through the Unitarian Universalist Association and I thank you with my heart for joining us today.

First, let me do a prayer.

God of bread, Dios de Pan. You have given us bread that comes from heaven. Tu nos has dado pan bajado del cielo. And all your creation reminds me of your flavour. Y toda la creación me habla de tu sabor. Come through the shape of the words that are coming out of my mouth Ven a través de las palabras que saldrán de mi boca So that beginning in you leads me to end in you. Para que comenzando en ti me lleves a terminar en ti.

Amen.

“What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Community, these are the words of people asking Jesus for *more*—for something greater. Earlier in John chapter six, Jesus had just finished feeding five thousand people. And those crowds, moved by that miracle, wanted to proclaim him king.

Imagine that amount of people! Maybe the closest comparison today would be the Boston Marathon, or a Taylor Swift concert at Gillette Stadium. Imagine... five thousand opinions about who Jesus is. And it’s not impossible—around our own Thanksgiving tables today, that we may encounter more opinions about Jesus than actual believers. Those who demanded a sign from Jesus would have seen in him the fulfillment of a kingdom, more like their opinion, than our loving God.

They quote their ancestors and remember the manna in the wilderness, but Jesus corrects them. That bread did not come from Moses—it came from God. Jesus

is not the king they expect, because just like the manna, he comes from God, not from Moses. He is the sign of good news—news I want to share with you today.

The people search for him everywhere, yet even after being fed by him, they misunderstand him. They believe that, because they received bread, it must mean Jesus came to feed their dreams of grandeur and earthly kingdom. But Jesus is not trying to occupy the center. His focus remains on God, his Father: “It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.” They call him rabbi, master, and yet he doesn’t give them a sign or a recipe for the best cranberry sauce or the right oven temperature. Instead, he calls them to refocus on God.

Jesus himself is the sign — the bread that the Father has prepared, a bread that Moses and their ancestors could never have imagined, never tasted.

This bread — Jesus — tells them: “Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.” And in that verse, I read a faith rooted in practice. For me, following Jesus is a paradox: the more we strive to end the hunger of our neighbor, the more we desire this bread of life, this bread of God. And we do not need reminders that, for many people right now, hunger is not metaphorical. It is material. Concrete.

But I want to share good news for our neighborhood: Jesus, the bread of life, has been given through each one of you — in the ways you feed one unto another, the answer to our need for signs. One of the clearest places I have seen God more practical, is in our shared work as church communities with Capuchin Mobile Ministries. You may have seen me here, when I came to the Capuchin Ministries Gala. Did you enjoy it? I felt hope.

At First Church, last month and for the first time, we made sandwiches for this homeless ministry. We met brother Paul, Amanda Grant and Katherine Hughes. I felt warmth, excited... this is where we are united. This ministry has shown me something beautiful about both our communities: we do not serve in competition, but in companionship. Each community brings its own gifts, its own rhythm of prayer and practice, yet all of us move with the same purpose — to love our neighbors with something as simple and holy as bread and peanut butter.

Our different theological understandings shape our liturgies and our lives, but the unity of love binds us together. We follow our Master, Jesus, when we make a sandwich to end hunger, one trip through Boston and Cambridge at a time. One stomach full at a time. One thank you at a time.

In the voice of the oppressed and marginalized —a language that God speaks— I hear our vocation as followers of Jesus: “When the Egyptians treated us

harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.” That same God, through the teachings of Jesus, calls us to be the signs you want to see. To be the change you expect. Or in the words of June Jordan, We are the ones we have been waiting for to be the instruments of peace.

My brothers and sisters, the time has come to hear the voices of those whom we share our bread but have not heard their voices. The time has come to stop demanding signs and be those signs.

So today, on this Thanksgiving, I want to finish reminding you to celebrate with your families that the Gospel does not build walls — it tears borders with bread, cheese and ham!

Let us pray: Oremos:

Que el pan del cielo mojado de salsa de mora nos haga mas practicos en nuestro amor.

May the bread of heaven dipped with cranberry sauce make us more practical in our love.

Que el pan de vida nos haga valientes donde Jesus nos espera que lo seamos.

May the bread of life make us bold where Jesus expect us to be.

Y que el Dios que escucha el llanto de nuestros ancestros escuche al pobre, al refugiado, al exiliado, viudas y huérfanos

And may the God who heard our ancestors’ cries, hear those experiencing poverty, refugees, exiled, widows and orphans, today

Pues solo tú puedes saciar nuestra hambre de justicia ven a compartir con nosotros este día de Acción de Gracias.

where only you can end their hunger of justice come to be in our midst this Thanksgiving.

Amen. Asi Sea.