



One Page Sermon

By Rev. Robb McCoy

August 11, 2024

Grumbling, thief of joy

Recap of sermon from August 11, 2024

Scripture: John 6:25, 41-51

“Isn’t this Joseph’s Son?”

The Olympics are over, and now we can all go back to knowing nothing about gymnastics and diving again. Isn’t it funny how, in the matter of a fortnight, I developed a critical eye for judging Olympic events? Somehow I went from “Wow! That was amazing!” to “Ooh, that double hop is going to cost her a tenth.” I was also able to determine how often the judges were just completely wrong. They’ve had years of training, but I was here on my couch grumbling about that out-of-bounds that they missed.

Then on Saturday I watched Breaking, which was an incredible display of athleticism, agility, rhythm, and expression. I watched in awe as men spun, twisted, paused mid-twist, then kept going—right on the beat! And then it was over, and I was grumbling about which dancer was picked.

Grumbling. It is the participatory activity of every Olympics fan. We grumble over the bad judges, bad calls, missed opportunities, false starts, dropped batons, and awkward Australian dancers. The Olympics are an incredible display of human achievement. The athleticism and skill on display is breathtaking. It is the culmination of years of hard work and generations of development. And yet the sportsmanship, friendship, and brilliance was often overshadowed by the grumbling. Too often I missed the incredible joy of the triple pike and focused on the heel touching the line.

In today’s reading, the grumbling about Jesus starts. He says that he is the bread of life, come down from heaven to give eternal life. Fresh off the incredible double-experience of feeding the multitudes and walking across the lake, the grumbling begins in earnest. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”

They question his parentage. They basically ask, “Who does this guy think he is?” He’s a nobody. In fact, he’s worse than nobody. They know who he is, so they grumble about semantics and coming down from heaven. Jesus’ answer is illustrative. He doesn’t defend his authority. He doesn’t talk about the virgin birth or the incarnation. He simply says, “Stop grumbling.” In other words, “You’re missing the point.”



How often do we miss the point through our grumbling. Instead of accepting the joy and beauty that is before us, we find something to grumble about. Jesus is bringing life. He is bringing abundance. He is bringing meaning, beauty, generosity, forgiveness, and grace.

But the opposition grumbles about his parents. He reminds them of the simple fact—they have all been taught the stories. They have all been taught about God, about liberation, about the abundance that God provides. But only a few will actually hear and see what is happening. Every teacher is familiar with this phenomenon. Every student gets the same lesson. Some hear and understand, some go on unchanged.

All are (literally) “taught ones.” Not all get it though. Some will continue to be distracted by the grumbling. We have a choice to make. We are all “taught ones.” Will we be grumblers, or will we taste and see that the Lord is good. The bread of life is offered. We can accept the gift of joy, love, and faith, or we can grumble.

We Christians can be great at grumbling. Grumbling however, does nothing but steal our joy. There are real mis-steps, drops, and bad calls that are made. Injustice, persecution, exploitation—these are all things that rise above grumbling. These are things should be fought. But grumbling—finding fault in others (or in opening ceremonies), arguing over doctrine, worship styles, or traditions—these are things that make us miss the point.

See the joy of Christ’s abundance and love. Don’t grumble how others are doing it. See the amazing athleticism and skill, not the toe out of bounds. Don’t let grumbling steal the joy from eternal life.

Next Week: Bread of Life 3 of 4
“How does he give us flesh?”