

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

What I Know For Sure

Based on John 6:41-51

"Who do you think you are? Coming around here, telling everyone you are 'The Bread of Life!' Where do you get off saying something like that around here? We know all about you. Your father was a carpenter. And your mother, well everyone knows the story about your mother! And you think you can just wander in here and tell us what to do? Just who do you think you are?"

"I am the bread of life," (v48) was our Saviour's reply.

It makes us uncomfortable to hear our Christ spoken to in this way. You do not see it often in the New Testament. Scholars and authors have carefully over the years, edited our Gospels in such a way to ensure that our Saviour is always lifted up in the best light possible, with the perception that everyone around Him was just as enthralled and enraptured by His teachings. But the reality was, there was criticism of Christ amid the growing number of sheep and disciples. If this were not so, then there wouldn't have been that final trip to Jerusalem with the dire

consequences that came after.

A little stretching out of Verse 42 sheds light on the gossip and back-stabbing that Jesus was encountering, at the very same time we know the crowds were growing.

[Some] said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"

Funny how ghosts of the past continue to haunt, isn't it? Christ was a man in His early thirties when He began to minister. Many years had passed since Mary's encounter with an angel, and the scandalous events that unfolded after that. The haphazard birth in Bethlehem, followed shortly after by an escape into Egypt to avoid Herod's sword, had done little to squash the story-tellers. This was the juiciest series of events to hit Nazareth in decades! It was not a story that died down quickly.

Now years later, it was as if it was yesterday. "Your father was a carpenter. Blue collar

all the way! Rough hands and sore back every night. And was he really your father, or just some old man who took pity on your mother? And your mother, going on an 'extended visit' her cousin's, to try and cover up the fact that she was pregnant before her marriage. You've really got something to brag about Jesus. You and your family are the laughing stock of the village. You came from nothing and you are nothing, and in the end, you will be nothing!"

Hurtful words. Painful words. I am reminded of a difficult conversation many years ago in the lettuce department of my local grocery store, shortly after the breakdown of my first marriage. A high-school chum I had happened to bump into had made the misfortune of asking how things were. I carefully worded a short statement about the breakup, about feeling emotionally fragile, about beginning to rebuild my life and begin studying for Ministry. The man looked up sharply at my last comment and said, "Imagine that. A school like that, letting someone like you, to study for Ministry." Hurtful words at a difficult time. I will never forget them.

But the point of all this, is not to begin a 'pity party.' It is to

look closely at what Christ did next. He could have responded with anger. He could have retorted at their obviously superficial examination of the facts (He was born of a woman, so how can He claim to be divine?). He could have walked away. But instead, He stood His ground. And to use a line made popular by the editorial page of the magazine "O", Christ's response was more along the lines of "What I Know for Sure..."

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. (v51)

Christ said, "I know who I am. I know what I am. I know what is destined for Me. I wish only for you to believe in what I say, and seek the eternal life my words and my sacrifice offer you."

Words have the power to hurt or to heal. Hurtful words from people we care about and spend time with are doubly difficult. Hurtful words from those we love can take your breath away. We have probably all encountered some version of "Who do you think you are" kind of comments at some

point: a manager at work who didn't appreciate your insight; a friend who didn't want to hear the truth; a lover or companion struggling to trust a particular moment in your relationship; a fellow pew sitter who does not see the scriptures in the same light that you do. It is part of our human nature to lash out when we feel threatened or insecure. Hurtful words seems to be an easy fix to an emotionally tense situation.

You can respond with anger. You can return, more hurtful words to counter the comments.

Or you can think carefully about 'what you know for sure'.

I know that there are difficult people in this world, but that there are equally as many beautiful people in this world I enjoy spending time with, and learning from.

I know that the world is not always fair, and sometimes, it's my turn to take one for the team.

I know that in my most fragile moments, when I feel the world is against me, there is One, the Bread of Life, who

has not forgotten me, who understands exactly what I am feeling at the moment.

I know that in my most vulnerable moments, my Saviour breathes life into me, He feeds me spiritually with the bread of eternity; He restores my faith in people.

I know, that because I have Christ at my back, holding me up, I am powerful in His presence.

And I know that when His power lifts me up, I am able to respond to hurtful words, whenever and however they come, with a surety and steadfastness that confounds the world.

Who do I think I am?
Well let me tell you what I know for sure...