

“ROUTE RECALCULATING”

Rev. Becky Stephens

Text: John 6:35, 41-51 (NLT)

God's Word: Philippians 4:10-13 (NLT)

John 6:35, 41-51 NLT

³⁵ Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

⁴¹ Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph? We know his father and mother. How can he say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

⁴³ But Jesus replied, “Stop complaining about what I said. ⁴⁴ For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. ⁴⁵ As it is written in the Scriptures, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ (Not that anyone has ever seen the Father; only I, who was sent from God, have seen him.)

⁴⁷ “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ Yes, I am the bread of life! ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. ⁵⁰ Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.”

In our Gospel Lesson for this morning Jesus begins His statement with the words: “I am.” This was the same message that God gave to Moses at the burning bush: “I AM Who I Am.” It was the same message that Jesus used as a defense against the religionists: “Before Abraham was born, I am.” It is the same message we hear Paul proclaim to the Colossians: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”...and this is the same message that is proclaimed by John in the Book of Revelation: Jesus is He “who is, and who was, and who is to come.”

Christians have only one God...and that one God has come into this world in the form of a human being in order to give those who believe in Him...REAL LIFE! There are different ways of living this life. We can just merely exist...or...we can really live the full and abundant life that is only possible through Jesus, the Christ. So many of us are just “going through the motions” of living. And this “going through the motions” only brings us unsatisfactory results.

I have a friend who has lived his life just going through the motions. He went through the motions in high school...just to get by...so that he could get out! Now he is going through the motions of

life...getting up to go to work...coming home tired...and getting up the next day to do just the same thing all over again.

A few years ago at our 5 year class reunion this friend said to me: "If I had known that the best years of my life would be spent in high school...I would have made more out of those years." Well, I remember, he was miserable in high school and he's miserable now...he's going through the motions of life...for what?...just to get by and get out?

This my friends, is not life at all...this is death...this is hell! Hell on earth which will lead to hell for eternity! And there are many people who are living just this way. Of course Jesus...the One and Only true God... offers us the only alternative! And what a great alternative it is!!!

Do you guys use GPS? Either on your phones or in your cars? My GPS is called Bonnie in the box. Sometimes she's very nice to me. "In 1 mile, turn right." Other times, it's as though she's yelling at me. "I SAID, turn right." And when she's mad, she does not give any warning. Just as I'm about to pass the turn, she will yell, "TURN RIGHT!" She and I don't always agree on the right path to take. She thinks she knows the best route and there are times that I think I know the best route. In both of our defenses, we have both been right and we have both been wrong. But when I stray from the desired route, her immediate response is, "Route recalculating." And every few seconds, she repeats herself, until I get back on the desired route. She never just throws up her proverbial hands and says "You are too lost for my help!" There's always a way back.

When we've made a mistake in life, we are not discarded. We are not told we are not worthy. We hear Jesus say, "Route recalculating." Maybe the path we're on was not God's original intent for your life, but for whatever reason, this is where you find yourself. It's okay. Welcome Jesus words that say, "Route recalculating."

In verse 35 Jesus declares: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."* This is one of the greatest passages in John's Gospel. The metaphor that Jesus uses to describe Himself says to us that just as bread gives us physical life, Jesus gives us real life.

Bread nourishes our lives...it is essential. Jesus sustains our spiritual lives...which is a radically new relationship between us and God. Without Jesus, real life, which is much more than just mere existence, is not possible.

The folks in the text today, get stuck because their picture of God is too small. They can't even comprehend that this neighbor boy, Jesus, could even be God's Son. They have their route set in their minds—God has a very different route.

Many who are just going through the motions of life are very aware that that they are just merely existing...and therefore they have an insatiable hunger for some kind of "real existence." Ignoring the offer of Jesus Christ, many people look to the world for some kind of real life. Therefore, they make gods out of athletes, movie stars, rock icons, the rich and the famous...and they try their best to become like them. Instead of trusting the ultimate GPS, they forge their own path.

Of course, one only has to make a passing glance at some of the tabloid newspapers in the grocery line to see that the lives of the rich and famous are not necessarily happy nor satisfactory ones. And as people try to emulate these false gods...they find that their lives as well are not satisfactory...

- As they give into the temptation to cheat on their wives...which leads to anger, resentment, distrust, divorce...and on occasion...murder and suicide.
- As they strive to drive the fanciest cars...bringing themselves under the cloud of debt...which causes anxiety and worry.
- As they do all in their power to be sexy and attractive...spending great amounts of time and money on the latest diets, fashion trends, plastic surgery...etc., etc. Hey, but you know what...eventually, time is going to win that battle no matter who you are and no matter how much money you have.

Can't you hear Jesus say in all of these circumstances—NOT “Oh, well—she blew it! Or he's beyond my help.” But, “Route recalculating!”

I have a friend, who, is in her mid to late fifties and is doing all she can to stay ‘looking young’. I recently spent some time with her, and came to the realization that she is absolutely miserable. She had some cosmetic surgery...but...even though she likes the results...this has not satisfied her in the least. “I wish I were younger,” she told me one night. “I would like to be 25 again or even 35 again.” My response was, “Not me.” Well, in reality, I am 48—not much older than her goal age...but I sure wouldn't want to be 25 again. I have never been so happy in all my life.

Olivia and I do not have tons of money...but we do have something that is much more valuable than anything else in this entire Creation...we have “Life” ... Real Life... through a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is Who we strive to serve...This is Who we strive to emulate...This is our one and only God! This may cause us to “look” poor in the eyes of the world...but in Reality...we are rich...beyond our wildest dreams!!!

Jesus tells us: *“all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”* Jesus Christ regards us as a gift to Him from the Father!!! What an awesome God we have!!! Jesus response is always, “Route recalculating!”

We speak of Christ Himself as God's “unspeakable gift” to us, as something that breaks through language and cannot be described, as the last and crowning proof of God's divine grace and kindness toward us. And this is natural enough.

But Jesus actually regards us, and the saving of us from our Fallen Nature and stubbornness, not as an annoying and all but impossible task, but as a gift from the Father to Him...to be prized and treasured!!! Praise be to God!

Jesus response is always, "Route recalculating!" There is always grace. God will make a way where there seems to be no way.

But still...so many of us resist this most awesome Reality! In verse 44 Jesus says: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..."* It is God's will that no person should perish, but that all will accept the saving grace of Jesus Christ. So God "draws" each of us to Jesus...the Only One through Whom anyone can be saved.

Now William Barclay tells us about the background of the verb "draws" in verse 44. It usually implies some resistance to God's attraction. There is a resistance to the draw...as so many of us reject Christ's offer of salvation...or ignore it...or try to "put it off until some other day" ...as we continue to go through the motions of this life...trying to find a meaning to our existence through our own futile attempts. Trying to forge our own route, because we think we know the best route.

And God does give us a choice. We have free will. God did not create a bunch of robots. Our resistance can overcome God's draw! We can choose to reject God's call on our lives...We can choose hell over heaven...death over life! We can choose our own path. And to make this choice is like refusing bread when we are starving...and when we do that we are refusing the very essential of Life!!! Life here and life in eternity with God are turned down!

Jesus tells us: *"I am the bread of life...If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* To really receive from Christ what he has to give us, really to experience his saving power...we must feed on him---there is no other way to express it with such accuracy---we must absorb his teaching, his character, the virtue that is in Him...until His mind becomes our mind and His ways become our ways...till we think somewhat as He would if He were in our place...until His power has become our power!!!

Hear Jesus say, "Route recalculating! Route recalculating!" Hear the grace that is offered. Abandon the path you are on and reroute, my friend.

As Paul says while sitting in a Roman prison: *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

With God's help we can change our path. With God's help, we can reroute.

Have we learned the secret of being content in any and every situation? If so, then we have a steady diet of The Bread of Life...having removed our resistance to God's drawing us to Christ. And we must be sure and "pass the Bread." There is plenty to go around!

This Bread is to be shared by us with all who will take it...and in the sharing of it...we value it even more!!! And this, my friends is what it means to have "Real Life!" This is what it means to follow God's GPS. God's Positioning System.

Amen