

We Are What we Eat

Texts: 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:13-14

Ephesians 5:15-20

(Series B, 11th Sunday after Pentecost)

Psalms 130

John 6:51-58

Let us Pray:

I will begin this sermon by asking you a question: What is the most consistent *image* of heaven given in the Bible, or what comes to your mind when you hear the word *Heaven*? (wait for congregation's reaction & answers). No, it is not golden streets and pearly gates. It is not harps and eternal singing - the image of heaven in the Bible is that of "*Celebrations*" feasting with the family of God.

What is so good about the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and other family dinners? *The food*? Maybe not; more than just food, it is the fellowship. It is the coming together of family, the sharing, the laughter, the tears, the jokes and all that the years bring.

I remember 39 years ago Susan & I visited my native country – we were entertained by my mother, extended family members and friends with food and more food, it was a great time for the family to celebrate my homecoming and meeting my new bride. Family festivity and community celebration – is what heaven is all about.

Christianity is all about this side of heaven: festivity in the life to come; but festivity in the *here and now* as well. In the *Here and Now* we can have a foretaste of the feast to come. But how is this celebration possible? As Lutheran Christians, we believe and teach that it is through faith in Jesus Christ as we dine at the Lord's table.

Jesus said: "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them."

These words are not words that pertain only to what we do at the communion table, they are more encompassing than that. They apply to every minute of every day. "*Whoever eats my flesh, and drink my blood has eternal life.*"

“He who believes has eternal life” Here and Now. In theology this is called “Realized eschatology”. *“Realized eschatology”* is the experience of the hereafter in the *Here and Now*. That is what faith is all about. Faith that gives us the foretaste of the things to come. In other words: *The Best is yet to come.*

This experience of eternity is not so other worldly or beyond the earth, that we are totally lifted out of our sinful selves. In the ***Here & Now*** we still have our feet fixed in the dust. We remain less than perfect, until we are called home, when the foretaste becomes a feast and eternal celebration.

The living Christ meets us, and greets us and makes us family in this life when we trust our life into his hands. That is a surprise to many who think of religion in terms of dry theology.

To be alive in the ***Here & Now*** – means; the resurrected Christ is well and alive in us and working out his divine purpose through us. Salvation is not how we feel, but is based on fact of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Jonathan Goforth, a renowned missionary to China in the 1930’s, spoke in a chapel in Southern China. After his sermon, a man came up and to talk to him. *“I have heard you speak three times, and you always have the same theme. You always speak of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ. Why?”*

The missionary replied, “Before answering your question, I would like to ask you, ‘What did you have for dinner today?’” “Rice”, the man relied. “What did you have yesterday?” “The same thing, rice”. “And what do you expect to eat tomorrow?” Rice, of course.”

It gives me strength. I could not do without it. *Sir, it is my very life!*” The missionary responded, “What you have said of rice, Jesus is to me! He is the *“rice”* of life.” The kind of bread Jesus had in mind when referring to Himself as the *“Bread of Life”* (John 6:35) was unleavened, typifying the absence of evil (1 Cor. 5:6-8). He is the sinless Son of God who bore in his own body our sin on the cross. That’s why if anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever (John 6:48—51).

The word of “*eternal life*” is found 400 times in the Bible, and the word expresses the very essence of God: that God is forever, that God’s love is forever, , that God lives forever. And...those who are known by God shall also live and be loved by God forever.

Forever describes the very core essence of God’s character, and therefore the very core essence of God’s plan for us today and in the future. “Ah, some might say but it can’t be true. Why can’t it be true? It is not true because it is too good to be true, as if that were a logical statement.

There is a chorus of disbelief that rings out in the recesses of our minds: “Death is death is death. Abraham is dead. Paul is dead. Luther is dead. John F. Kennedy is dead. Michael Jackson is dead, Albert Schweitzer is dead.” “My mother is dead, my father is dead.”

And to the chorus of dead, dead, dead, the gospel message sings triumphantly, Life, life, life, forever and ever and ever.” The gospel tells us that there is no cut off in our relationship with God, there is no expiring date in our relationship with God.

To be alive with God is to *know* God, beginning on this day and forever, for that is God’s very essence. ... How long is living forever? Are we nourishing our soul with the Bread of Life? All people can share this common experience by meeting the master, the bread of life, through faith.

Jesus said: “*If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*” Yes, through this bread which came down from heaven, offers life to all who will receive him. Plain and common men and women are transformed by faith as they stand at the foot of the cross and center their life through faith in the Lord and Saviour.

There on the cross Jesus *suffered* to help us all, Jesus *died* to save us all; Jesus’ body was *broken* for us all’ Jesus’ blood was *spilled* for us all. This supreme sacrifice can change us all. The common person is transformed; the ordinary person becomes extraordinary at the foot of the cross. There we are, being prepared for heaven.

In his book, *Hereafter*, David Winter tells a story of a little girl playing in the mud who asks her mother – “What’s mud for?” “For making bricks” replied the mother. “What are bricks for?” “Making houses, dear!” “What are houses for?” “People!” And what are people for? People are made for God, to live for God in the *Here & Now* and to live with God in the hereafter. Eternal life is what people are for.

Let me tell a secret, just between you and I okey: eternal life does **not** begin when we die and the casket is closed, and beautiful eulogies are spoken about our life. Inspiring sermons and songs are sung, that is a poor theology, and false teaching of Scripture.

According to our text eternity begins the moment to taste that bread of life that came down from heaven. In another word, when faith is place in the person of Jesus Christ, eternity begins *Here and Now*.

Here & Now, as well as in the here after, we have our lives eternalized. Eternal life is a quality of life, not just quantity of life. Eternal life begins now when Christ takes residence in our life. This eternal life is the *Here & Now* and is nourished through God’s word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Faith is eternal “bread from heaven” which nourishes our faith for the rough journey through the wilderness of life. It causes us to abide in Christ and Christ in us (John 6:56). It means that we are fed before we are sent forth to feed others. It means that we feast with Christ before we work for Christ.

In conclusion, Paul the Apostle writes to reaffirm the teachings of Jesus about abiding in Christ Jesus. Paul says: “The days we are living in are evil,” – evil seems ever present at every turn in our life.

Therefore, we need to conduct our lives according to the *Bread of Life* which came down from heaven. Therefore, do not be foolish, but *understand / know* (***Epiginosko*** – *become fully acquainted with truth*) what the will of God is.

A Cheerful heart makes good music. “A Cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” Proverbs 17:22. A thankful or cheerful hearts and lips come from a secure relationship with God.

Anyone whose relationship with the resurrected Christ is secure will praise God even when word fails him / her in most the difficult circumstance. Because they are satisfied by the Bread of Life which came down from heaven.

When the Pastor says during Holy Communion: "*This is the body of Christ given for you & the blood of Christ shed for you.*" What is actually taking place is the fact that you are receiving Christ, abiding in Christ, and foretasting the coming of God's reign. In our spiritual journey. We become what we eat.

As the Prayer of St. Francis says, "*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.*" Pastor Max Lucado said beautifully, "*Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner!*"

Remember that faith, *as small as a mustard seed*, or, in the case of Jesus as our Eternal Life-Giving Bread, faith as small as a grain of wheat, is how we begin to forgive another. An act of mercy we give to one is also received by us. Forgiveness given for another brings us closer to forgiving ourselves for our actions / thoughts / judgments, etc., that we keep deeply hidden within us.

Forgiveness is a work in progress, like life itself. As we work to fill our souls with faith in Christ, He, as our eternal Bread of Life, will be our Guide to free us from the useless prison of an angry or bitter heart.

Jesus tells us no fewer than six times in this Gospel reading, that He is our salvation, our bread of eternal life ~ do we *hear it*, do we *know it*, do we *believe it* yet? Through him, by God, we are forgiven everything, if we only just *believe*. Then faith will truly change our lives. – Let us all walk the way of understanding and feed, feed, feed, feed on the Bread of Life which came down from heaven.

Invitation to accept this bread of Life is for all who hunger!

**May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep,
your heart and mind through Jesus Christ, our Lord
who is the true bread from heaven.**

Amen.

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