

Eat the Bread *Believe in Christ Jesus*

Texts: Proverbs 9:1-6
Ephesians 5:15-20 (Series B, 12th Sunday after Pentecost) Psalm 34:9-14
John 6:51-58

Let us Pray:

A friend of mine called last week. He asked, “How are you bro?” It’s a common question, one we ask and are asked every day. You and I both know the standard answers and I gave them. I said, “Fine. I’m doing well. Things are really busy right now. But I’m good.” He laughed and said, “Sam are you trying to convince me or yourself?”

I suspect I’m not the only one who had this type of conversation. Most of us have these kinds of conversations several times each day. We offer the usual answers. Sometimes we add few things such as our family, our health, where we have been, or what we have been doing.

More often, these conversations focus on the circumstances of life. We might be fine and busy, getting our work done, meeting deadlines and commitments, fulfilling obligations, volunteering our time, and loving and caring for our families but there is a difference, a vast difference, between *doing life* and *having life within* us.

Doing life or having life; that’s the issue Jesus is concerned about. That’s the focus of today’s gospel. It is important enough that it has been the subject of the last several Sundays of gospel readings. Each week has brought us closer to the unspoken question behind today’s gospel: Is there life within you and within me?

That’s a hard question and one which many will avoid or ignore. They will *turn back and walk away rather than face the question*. “Fine,” “busy,” “good,” and “doing well” do not answer the question. We just cover it up. The question pushes us to discover the hunger within us and the life Jesus wants to feed us. That’s what Jesus has been after these last few weeks.

Three weeks ago, 5000 plus hungry people showed up on a hill side. They were fed with five loaves and two fish. They didn't understand. They thought it was about loaves and fish. It was really about life and where life comes from. Two weeks ago *Jesus challenged us to consider the bread we eat*. Is it perishable bread or does it endure to eternal life? Last week Jesus declared himself to be the bread of life, the living bread that came down from heaven.

Today he says, "Eat me. Drink me." This is the only way you and I would ever have life within us. Jesus is very clear and blunt about it. His flesh is true food and his blood is true drink. Any other diet leaves us empty and hollow, hungry and bereft of life.

"Very truly, I tell you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you." Those are gloomy words, words that haunt and challenge us to consider whether there is life within us.

Jesus is talking about more than just physical or biological life. He's talking about that life that is beyond words, indescribable, and yet we know it when we taste it. We get a taste of it when we love so deeply and profoundly that everything about us dies, passes away, and somehow we are more fully alive than ever before.

Sometimes everything seems to fit together perfectly and all is right with the world; not because we got our way but because we knew our self to be a part of something larger, more beautiful, and more holy than anything we could have done. We were tasting life. In that moment we are in the flow, the wonder, and the unity of life, and it tastes good.

Most of us spend a fair amount of time, energy, and prayer trying to create and possess the life we want. In spite of our best efforts sometimes we live less than fully alive. Sometimes the outside and inside of who we are don't really match up.

We ask ourselves, *"What am I doing with my life?"* What am I missing? We wonder if this is all there will ever be. Is this as good as it gets? We lament at what

has become of us and our life. Nothing seems to satisfy. We despair at what is and what we think will be. Feeling empty we find no place in which we really belong.

⟨2⟩

Those questions and feelings are not so much a judgement on us I must say, but a diagnosis of us. They are symptoms that there is no life in us. We are dying from the inside out. There is, however, treatment for our condition and food for our hunger, and our cravings.

Life in Christ, not death in the wilderness, is our destiny. The flesh and blood of Christ are the medicine that saves; St. Ignatius called this “*the medicine of immortality.*” One dose, however, is not enough. We need a steady diet of this sacred medicine, this holy food.

Jesus is our medicine and our health. He is our life and the means to the life for which we most deeply hunger and long for. We don’t work for the life we want. We eat the life we want. Wherever human hunger and the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ meet, there is life, fullness of life.

- To feed on the Bread of Life is to believe Jesus Christ as your Saviour, my Saviour and trust in him as the source of our life.
- To eat Jesus’ flesh and blood means to completely depend on him and the truths he teaches for nourishment and life itself.

Jesus says that eating his body and drinking his blood allows his followers to abide in him and he in them. Praying the Lord’s Prayer, partaking in communion, being Christian people—this is a group project.

The living bread of heaven came down from heaven into the realities of human life. Christ followers too must be willing to come down from their lofty ideals and enter the messiness, the offensiveness, of human need.

When we partake of the Lord’s Supper we are commanded to *remember Jesus’ death for our sins.* We are forgiven, and to *remember* the Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead, the same Spirit that gives us spiritual life to us and will ultimately raise our bodies from the dead on the Last Day. The Lord’s Supper as an

act of *remembering, reflecting, believing, trusting* -- this indeed reenergizes us as food to our souls and life to our faith in Jesus Christ.

◀3▶

In the eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood he lives in us and we live in him. We consume his life that he might consume and change ours. We eat and digest his life, his love, his mercy, his forgiveness, his way of being and seeing, his compassion, his presence, his mission, and his relationship with the Father.

Feeding on Jesus' words and basking in his presence are the essence of trust, of true belief in him, ---- and so we grow in our faith. We eat and drink our way to life. The secret is the *Resurrection* on the last day is the consequence of *Believing*.

So, we eat and leave nothing behind. Push nothing to the side. We clean the plate! "Whoever eats me (believing in Jesus Christ) will live because of me," Jesus said.

Let us pray:

Our heavenly Father, so often our spiritual life seems pretty dry. Sometimes we partake of the Lord's Supper without really thinking too much about what we are doing. Forgive us we pray. Teach us to truly feed on Jesus in our heart by faith, and with thanksgiving. Help us to become less dependent upon our own ways, but fully dependent upon Him, fully trusting, fully walking by faith. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

August 18, 2024

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