

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



John 6:51-58

Inwardly Digest the Bread of Life

Our First Lesson for this morning has an interesting picture. *Wisdom* is a woman calling people to a feast that she has prepared. *Wisdom* is that we know God's ways. The *simple* are those in life who haven't rejected God, but don't know his truths. Those who heed the call of God's Word "**will live**" and "**walk in the way of insight.**" Life will be better when you take the truths about the true and only God and put them into practice in your life.

To find real wisdom in life is more than just learning a set of facts about the Bible. One of the challenges for me as I teach confirmation class at school is making it more than just a memorization class. Lean on students hard enough and you can get them to memorize all sorts of things. But that isn't the wisdom that the Bible wants us to have. We aren't just supposed to be good at Bible trivia games, but to grow in our insight and understanding of God's Word so that we can put it into practice.

In our text from John 6, Jesus says that we are to "**eat my flesh.**" The word Jesus used is a little more graphic than just "eat." It can also mean to *gnaw* and *chew on*. The word is often used to describe an animal eating. A dog eating his meal is intense and not too happy if you interrupt the meal. When Jesus tells us that we are to "eat my flesh" it is more than just a casual familiarity with it. He wants us to dig in and learn us so that we can use it in our lives.

If you've been a Lutheran long enough you may remember that in the old hymnal, one of the common prayers we used at the end of worship was that we would "**read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest**" God's Word. We still use that prayer, but the wording has been changed to "**May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart.**" Perhaps it isn't as vividly stated, but the point remains: we want God's Word to live in us and guide us. We need Jesus!

Before we talk about why Jesus is so important and what he offers us, I need to veer off the main point to straighten out a misunderstanding about these verses. These verses are not about the Lord's Supper. While it is true that Jesus gives us his body and blood in the Lord's Supper, he wasn't talking about that here. First of all, the institution of the Lord's Supper was still over a year away. If the Lord's Supper had not been instituted, Jesus' words would have been impossible for his first audience to understand. Second, Jesus makes a clear promise that all who "**eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life.**" But there is no promise like that about the Lord's Supper. In fact, there is a warning that those who take the sacrament without recognizing what they are doing are bring God's judgment on themselves. Finally, there is no command that the Lord's Supper is required for salvation. It is a blessings and so should be received. But those who have not received the sacrament are not automatically damned. In John 6, Jesus makes it a requirement to take his flesh.

So the eating and drinking that Jesus requires are a picture of faith. In the context, if we go back we hear Jesus say, "**The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.**" That's the key point. Jesus wants us to believe!

"It is all about me." When someone claims or even hints at that idea, you probably are on guard. If it is a child, you correct them and teach them not to be selfish.

But in our text, Jesus says that it is all about him. There is no other way to come into a relationship with God than to know Jesus Christ and to believe in him. This text continues our readings from John 6 in which Jesus slams the door on the idea that we have to do something to earn God's favor.

And it hurts to get your fingers slammed in the door. We want to do something! We want to be better than other people. We want to deserve salvation.

Instead we have to stomach the harsh reality that we deserve nothing from God expect his eternal anger and punishment. That is a tough pill to swallow because it means that I'm a sinner. It is easy to deal with the fact that you are sinner. I can even forgive you for it. But when it is personal, it hurts. It hurts because it means the sins I try to brush aside as normal or no big deal, cannot be so easily excused. It hurts because it means my excuses for not going to Bible Class or not reading my Bible more regularly are a damning sin. The list of sins in our 2nd Lesson is not to be taken lightly. Drunkenness, ignoring God's Word, or living as a fool who is guided by the world are sins. But God loves us enough to give us the truth. If he let us live with the impression that our sins aren't that big of a deal, we would be lost.

Jesus' main point is that we need him to be our Savior! We don't just need to know him that he existed as a historical figure, but we need to put our faith in him. We need to believe in him as our Savior. Through faith we are connected to the benefits of all he did. His perfect life is credited to us through faith. Through faith we are connected to the cross where our sins were punished. Through faith we rise with Christ on Easter; death has no power over us.

In one way, Christianity is remarkably easy. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and you are forgiven of your sins and Jesus promises through out this chapter that you will live in heaven.

But that faith isn't easy. It requires that we admit that sin is real—not just theoretically, but personally. What's more, it requires that we make what our Lutheran theologians call "*the intellectual sacrifice.*" That sacrifice is what Paul

talks about in 1 Corinthians: "**We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles**" (1:23). Salvation comes only from Christ. Your efforts — as reasonable and logical as they seem — are worthless before God. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, you didn't save yourself. That's not easy. I want a little credit; but the Bible offers none.

We need to chew on God's Word to let this Gospel grow in our hearts. You cannot "outlearn" God. As life changes, you will see new and powerful ways that the message of Jesus is important for you.

That is the second reason that Christianity is difficult. In our Second lesson we heard, "**Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is**" (Ephesians 5:15-17). Live your faith. Give careful thought to the attitudes that guide you. Be honest enough to evaluate your actions. Then as the love of Christ grows in your heart, make the necessary effort to be more loving and kind. Be generous with your possessions and selfless with your time.

Whether it be faith to overcome the doubts that arise or the strength to do what is right, we need Christ. We need to grow in Christ as we hear his Word. Christianity isn't just a quick shot of God that lasts about a week. Immerse yourself in Christ by growing in his Word. The benefits will be without limit. God wants you to know the joy of his presence in your life. He wants you to see the joy that awaits you so this world of sorrow and sin doesn't send you into depression. Make time for Christ and you will be blessed. Amen.

Pentecost 13
August 23, 2015

