

August 15, 2021

St. John 6:51-58:

## **“The Bread That Gives Life Forever”**

- I. Disputed Among Themselves.
- II. Eating Flesh and Drinking Blood.
- III. Will Live Forever.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 N. Oakland Avenue  
Decatur Illinois 62526

Dear Friends in Christ,

Here's an excerpt from an article written by author Marshall Shelley which appeared 21 years ago in a publication called *Leadership*:

"Even as a child, I loved to read, and I quickly learned that I would most likely be confused during the opening chapters of a novel. New characters were introduced. Desperate, seemingly random events took place. Subplots were complicated and didn't seem to make any sense in relation to the main plot.

"But I learned to keep reading. Why? Because you know that the author, if he or she is good, will weave them all together by the end of the book. Eventually, each element will be meaningful.

"At times, such faith has to be a conscious choice.

"Even when I can't explain why a chromosomal abnormality develops in my son, which prevents him from living on earth more than two minutes....

"Even when I can't fathom why our daughter has to endure two years of severe and profound retardation and continual seizures....

"I choose to trust that before the book closes, the Author will make things clear."

From the very beginning, *The Author Of Life* made the course of life very clear: "...in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen 2:17). He didn't elaborate on the multitude of sufferings, explosive conflicts, the streams of fears and tears, the process of dying before the moment of death. The discoveries began that first dark night outside the Garden; began when Adam toiled to survive and Eve experienced the first pains of childbirth; began when their firstborn son murdered his brother. And that's the way its been ever since. We're here to receive . . .

## THE BREAD THAT GIVES LIFE FOREVER

### I. Disputed Among Themselves.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

"The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat."

I want to first look at that statement "disputed among themselves." Disputed - that is, *argued sharply, questioned, debated*. That's the way its always been with Jesus. That's the constant with most of the church today, thanks to the evolutionary thinking that truth evolves according to how each generation sees it. The words of Oliver Hardy of the old comedy team, or should I say the ancient comedy team, of Laurel and Hardy nicely sum up where human wisdom, apart from God, and where evolutionary progressivism have brought the church and the world: "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me (us) into."

It's always been that way. God speaks. Man disputes. Not because humans get smarter. It's because the flesh craves and demands what it craves and demands. It's called sin - lawlessness. And look where that has brought everything. Look where we are! God said:

"...this people draw near me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men...'

"You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing you made should say to its maker, "He did not make me" or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?" (Is. 29: 13,16)

Relativism is "the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute. Dr. Paul Copan, author and professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University wrote:

"For the relativist there is no virtue or vice, only the quest for autonomy - the Burger King ethic of having it your own way. Once again, we intuitively recognize that such a view is deeply flawed; moral sages across the civilizations have recognized that good character must be cultivated. As Paul said to Timothy: 'Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.' (1 Tim. 4:7)

"Refusal to recognize that some values and character qualities are better than others is not only inconsistent; it also is soul-destructive and culture-destroying." (Paul Copan, "TRUE FOR YOU **BUT** NOT FOR ME", Bethany House, Minneapolis, 2009, p.89) [Just look at the social and political thinking of the day!]

## II. Eating Flesh and Drinking Blood.

So, the Jews disputed. God in the flesh doesn't. He hits with the truth:

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (vv. 53-56)

Jesus is not talking about Holy Communion. We would be incorrect to say that people who believe Jesus died on the Cross to pay for their sin, but, for several valid reasons, never receive the Lord's supper do not have eternal life. Jesus is talking about faith.

If we back up several verses from our text we have these words: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life (note: whoever **believes**). I am the bread of life... This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." (vv. 47,48,50) To believe Jesus is the one who earned forgiveness of sin and eternal life for us is to eat the Bread of Life!

In one of his sermons, Martin Luther said:

"...reason is so crude. When it hears theses words, 'You will eat my flesh and drink my blood,' it stands petrified and thinks of nothing but flesh...At once they think of butcher shops..."

"If they would only look at this correctly! Christ distinctly adds: 'My flesh,' 'My blood.' Earlier He explained the term 'to eat,' namely, that it denotes to believe in Him, that he who adheres to his flesh and blood by faith is eating and drinking it, and that it is this faith, this eating and drinking, or this food and drink, that affords eternal life..."

Do you remember the account of the woman at the well? Jesus said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (Jn. 4:10) So, is Christ talking literally about drinking some water, or about faith which gives and sustains eternal life, just as earthly water sustains physical life? Faith, of course. Jesus then said to the woman, "but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water I will give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn. 4:14)

### III. Will Live Forever.

And that brings us to our theme from the 58<sup>th</sup> verse of our text: "this is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." This is *The Bread That Gives Life Forever*.

Dear friends, that's the issue. People can be as flippant and silly as they want about death and *the what's beyond*. They can rant and rave, argue and reject, but it doesn't change the fact that no-one escapes the call for the last breath and the final curtain. There's always that, "What happens next?"

And whatever we do, let's not look at family and friends who go to church once-in-a-while and think, "Well, at least they go to church." The questions are: "Do they know Jesus? Are they eating and drinking His flesh and blood? Are they drinking the water of life? Do they trust in Him for forgiveness and eternal life, and, if so, what are they doing with what has been given?"

The Apostle Paul writes:

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:8-9)

And that's it! Physical death is the end of nothing. In Christ it is to enter eternal life - perfect life. And that's the promise that nourishes us every day. He is *the bread that gives life forever*. He is the water that takes away all thirst.

God bless our eating and drinking.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott