

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt
August 14th, 2016
Pentecost 13 Year B
John 6:51-58

Right before lunchtime I usually get really really hungry. It is hard to describe that feeling. Your stomach is empty and you really want something to eat. One time a great crowd of people was really really hungry. They had been listening to Jesus teach all afternoon and into the evening. They had not eaten dinner and they were very hungry. Jesus multiplied five loaves of bread and two small fish into enough food to feed five thousand men besides all the women and children.

That miracle is recorded at the beginning of John chapter 6. The next day the people went looking for Jesus because they wanted more bread. Instead Jesus offered them something better. Jesus said: "I am the Bread of Life." Today Jesus tells you and me

Eat the Bread of Life

- I. **This eating is believing**
- II. **This bread will give eternal life.**

Jesus says some shocking things in this Bible passage, doesn't he? He says, **"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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." (John 6:51-54)**

What could Jesus mean when he says eat my flesh and drink my blood? To eat Jesus' flesh and drink Jesus blood means to believe in him.

In the verses just before our verses for today, Jesus says,
"...everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him *shall have eternal life*, and **I will raise them up at the last day.**" (6:40)

And in verse 54 today he says,
"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has eternal life*, and **I will raise them up at the last day."**

Do you notice how those two verses are almost exactly the same, except, in the second passage, instead of "believe" he says "eat my flesh and drink my blood." Listen again. In verse 40 he says: "...everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him *shall have eternal life*, and **I will raise them up at the last day.**" (6:40) And then in verse 54 he says, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood *has eternal life*, and **I will raise them up at the last day.**" The verses are the same except instead of "believe" Jesus says "eat my flesh and drink my blood." That tells us that by "eat my flesh and drink my blood" Jesus is saying "believe in me."

But then why does Jesus say it like that? Well, when you eat something, it goes inside of you and becomes a part of you. Jesus does not want us to just believe in him with our heads. Jesus wants us to believe in him with our whole hearts.

Also, food goes inside of us. And in a mysterious way Jesus is in us. He says, **"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in them."** (John 6:56)

Also, when you eat food it nourishes you. Jesus nourishes us. Jesus nourishes our faith just like bread nourishes our bodies.

Jesus says **"Whoever eats this bread will live forever, This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6:51)** When you look at Jesus on the cross and see his flesh given for the life of the world and when you see his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins, when you look at Jesus on the cross and believe, that is eating Jesus' flesh and drinking Jesus' blood. Believe that Jesus on the cross took away your sins. That is eating Jesus flesh and drinking Jesus' blood.

Now a natural question is this: "Is Jesus talking about the Lord's Supper here?" The answer is "No, Jesus not talking about the Lord's Supper here. Jesus here is talking about FAITH, believing in him. Notice that this eating and drinking is a requirement for salvation. **"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."** (John 6:53) This is a requirement for salvation. But there are children who have faith but we don't give them the Lord's Supper because they have not been fully instructed yet. So Jesus is not talking about the Lord's Supper, he is talking about believing in him.

On the other hand, when we hear Jesus' words here, it is natural to think about the Lord's Supper. And, when we receive Jesus' true body and blood in the Lord's Supper, that certainly nourishes our faith. When you take the Lord's Supper today Jesus will be giving you his own body and blood and feeding your faith.

The second part of our sermon today is that this bread gives eternal life.

I said at the beginning of the sermon that after Jesus fed the five thousand. The people wanted them to give them more bread, just like the Israelites had manna from heaven every morning. They said to Jesus, **"What sign will you give us that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" (John 6:30-31)** And Jesus says "Yes, God gave your ancestors manna and that was a great gift. But remember that the manna did not keep them alive forever. They still died." What you need is a bread which will keep you alive forever. I am that bread." He says in our passage: **"My flesh is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread, my flesh, will live forever."** (John 6:58)

Jesus draws a comparison between himself and the manna. Just like the manna came down from heaven, Jesus came down from heaven. Just like the manna nourishes people, Jesus nourishes people. The difference between Jesus and the manna is that manna didn't keep people alive forever. Jesus the Bread of Life keeps people alive forever. Jesus said earlier in John 6 – **"I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever."** (John 6:48-51)

This is a great lesson to us not to get too caught up in the material things of this world. Material things are good, but they will not keep you alive forever. The one who eats the bread of life will live forever.

"Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me." (6:57) Human beings are kind of like batteries. Batteries can only live for so long apart from a power source. They need to be plugged into a power source. Jesus and the living Father and the Holy Spirit who gives life are the power source. When we eat the bread of life, we have an everlasting power source inside of us.

Now someone might say, "But believers still die." And that's true, but remember what Jesus said in John chapter 11 at the death of his friend Lazarus. He said, "

Look in faith to Jesus' flesh on the cross and you will live forever. Jesus nourishes you from the cross. Jesus comes to nourish you in his word. He comes to nourish you in baptism. And he comes to nourish you in the Lord's Supper. Eat the Bread of Life. Look to Jesus in faith and you will live forever. Amen.