

In the name of our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

⁴¹ At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

⁴³ “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

How many of you read food labels when you shop? Ever since I was diagnosed with diabetes, I pay attention to those food labels. I’m concerned with how many carbohydrates different foods contain because the greater the carbs the more my blood sugar rises. I also take note of the amount of sodium and the list of ingredients and in this way try to stay healthy. Eating the right kind of food is important.

When it comes to food, we have a lot of choices but throughout the Old Testament and at the time of Christ the diet of the people was pretty simple. Bread was sometimes the only food served and thus for many was their main source of nourishment. Without bread, a lot of people would have starved. That’s why the picture Jesus paints in this portion of scripture is one they could easily understand. **“Jesus identifies himself as the Bread that Gives life.”** As we consider this statement, let’s **“Note the Heavenly Ingredients,”** and **“Enjoy the Eternal Benefits.”**

I. In this chapter of John’s Gospel we can see many different interactions between Jesus and the people that all revolve around food. As we pick up the narrative, we want to focus in on the difference between food for the soul and food for the body.

He clearly stated, **“Food for the soul is more important than food for the body”** (John 6:27). And, **“That food for the soul comes from God in heaven”** (John 6:32). **This ‘bread of God’ is a person who comes from heaven and gives life to the world** (John 6:33). **Then Jesus hits them with the main point when he says, “I am the bread of life”** (John 6:35) and **“I have come down from heaven”** (John 6:38). Jesus couldn’t make it any clearer for them.

But the Jews rejected this bread from heaven. They didn’t want to believe him and their human logic got in the way. **“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”** You might think these folks had a point but when it came to the Old Testament prophecies and scriptures they were pretty smart – they knew them well. If they really took a close look at the life of Jesus and listened to

him – there would be no doubt that he was the fulfillment of these prophecies. But they had already decided to reject Jesus and so they ignored scripture and grumbled among themselves about what Jesus had said.

Jesus, God's Son, knew what they are thinking and tells them, **“Stop grumbling among yourselves.... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”** In other words, “Put aside your spiritual junk food – change your spiritual diet by looking to God for your salvation!” Only God can provide what you need – only God can draw you to himself. Luther, in his explanation to the third article of the Apostle's Creed, wrote, “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him.” God draws us to himself through the cross and his Son who suffered on the cross.

The cross points us to the death that we deserve for our sins but also to God's love in providing his Son as the solution to our problem of sin – on the cross we see God's great exchange – our sins for Jesus righteousness that comes to us through the gift of faith. That gift of faith can only come through the work of the Holy Spirit whom the Father also sends to us.

The Spirit works through the Word as Paul wrote, **“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.** (Romans 10:17) and that takes us back to the words of Jesus – the words that bring life – the words that nourish and refresh – the words that bring peace and comfort – the words the Jews grumbled about and rejected.

We have these very same heavenly ingredients that come to us through the Word. We have been called by God – drawn to our Savior through his Word. Yet, it is so easy for us to get depressed, to grumble, when life doesn't go the way we think it should. We hear God's Word but don't see how it can help us.

Do you think Elijah, in our Old Testament lesson might have felt that way? He had just defeated 400 prophets of Baal. He had won a great victory in God's name and yet he was fleeing for his life. He thought he was the only believer left and asked God to take his life. He knew God's Word, yet was tired and ready to give up.

We get tired too. Sometimes we get frustrated by everything happening in our lives and in the world around us. Rather than grumbling – look to the Father and let him draw you to Christ – the living bread that gives you strength – strength through forgiveness, strength through the promise of God, strength through the assurance that God has plans for you and he will take care of you and you are not alone in this world – Jesus is the Bread of Life; the food we need for our souls. Listen to him and learn from him. And enjoy the eternal Benefits.

II. As Jesus talked to the Jews he made a very simple statement, **“I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”** There it is. Faith alone in Christ alone brings everlasting life in heaven. Nothing else. It doesn't make any difference if you are a good person or if you try hard or if you are better than the guy down the street. Only faith in Christ brings salvation. That is the truth found in scripture. That is the life found in Jesus, the Bread of Life. That is the eternal benefit our God wants us to have.

That is why Jesus repeats this truth a number of times throughout the discourse contained in this chapter. We have heard during the last few weeks how, “[Their] forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.” A reminder of how the things of this world can’t save us. “But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

There it is. A simple summary of Jesus’ sermon:

1. Jesus is the living bread of life
2. Jesus came from heaven
3. Those that believe (eat of this bread) will be saved
4. Salvation comes only through his flesh – his life which he gave to pay for the sins of the world to bring life through forgiveness and everlasting life through faith in Christ

Everlasting life is yours. It comes to you through faith in Jesus Christ. That faith is maintained by the nourishment found in God’s Word. That’s it. There is no other way. So pay attention to your food – your spiritual food.

The Bible, centered on Jesus Christ, is the source of this spiritual food. Don’t get filled up by spiritual junk food – the philosophies of this world or the idea that everyone is going to heaven or we can work our way there – but rather look for the spiritual nourishment you find in God’s Word. Pay attention to the ingredients and then you will enjoy the everlasting benefits of forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life in heaven. Amen.