

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through faith in Christ Jesus – the Bread of Life. Amen.

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.” ⁵² Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

⁵³ Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ 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. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.” **This is God’s Word for our meditation.**

Dear Friends,

At our house, when our kids were growing up, we always had the tradition of sitting down and eating the evening meal together. This was a time when we talked about what had happened during the day and maybe some of the major news items. When our children were in high school I really looked forward to this time at the evening meal. Many times I didn’t know where the conversation would go but I always knew it would be interesting. As we continue our journey through chapter six of John’s Gospel, the portion before us talks about a meal. It encourages us, **“To Eat and Drink at the Table of our Savior.”** This is the place, **“Where the Conversation is Stimulating,”** and **“Where the Food is Exactly what We Need.”**

I. A few weeks ago we heard about Jesus feeding the 5000. Then he went away by himself because the people wanted to make him their bread king and that wasn’t part of God’s plan. Now Jesus is with his disciples once again and many of the same people he fed on that mountainside have found him, but the conversation has sort of caught them off guard.

Maybe they were looking for Jesus to give them more bread to eat. Maybe they were looking for a miracle, but I don’t think they expected the words they were about to hear. Jesus said, **“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.”** With these words he gives them a miracle, something they were looking for, but they fail to grasp it. We might very easily miss it too, but the miracle is there for, **“Anyone who eats of this bread,”** that is, anyone who takes in Christ through faith, will have eternal life. That is the miracle! That Jesus Christ brings us life and that we are able to “take him in” through faith. That he becomes a part of us. It’s a miracle because it goes beyond human reason and it is something only God can bring about. We can’t “jump start” our spiritual heart. Only God can change our heart and bring us spiritual life. What’s more, this bread, Jesus Christ our Savior, will give do this – give us life – by giving his life for the life of the world.

Jesus said, “I will do this.” He is not being forced to do it but he wants to give his life for us and he is doing it voluntarily. That is our Savior’s great love for us that he would give his life to

redeem our sins. And his death is vicarious – which means he has given his life in our place so that through this sacrifice the world might have life. As Jesus spoke these words he was indicating that this is what was going to happen in the very near future and yet it wasn't a completely new concept. John the Baptist referred to Jesus giving his life for the world when he pointed to Jesus and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”** (John 1:29) Isaiah referred to it when he wrote, **“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** (Isaiah 53:5). Can you find more stimulating conversation that to have your Lord tell you how he is the Bread of Life?

Yet, even though this may have been a stimulating conversation, it this was tough for the people to understand. They probably knew Jesus was speaking figuratively but they couldn't grasp the meaning of what he was saying. Maybe it was because they denied he was the Son of God (v. 42). Already at this stage “Christ crucified” was becoming a stumbling block for the Jews.

Eating flesh and drinking blood was not an easy concept for them to understand or visualize in this context because it went against the Old Testament laws they had learned from a young age. But as Jesus spoke these words he doesn't mean to offend them but to prepare them for what was coming. But many people rejected Jesus as God's Son and so they had a hard time with these words and their unbelief caused them to actually take offense at his words.

These words were not only for the Jews but they are for us also. We appropriate them – eat and drink Christ's flesh and blood – through faith. Paul tells us, **“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** (Romans 10:17) Through faith we share in Christ's death (which reminds us of Law – the payment needed for our sins) as well as his resurrection (which reminds us of the Gospel – the fact that our salvation is complete and we receive the benefits of Christ's death through faith).

Eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood may not be the words we would chose to use when we talk about the reality of our spiritual life, but it certainly conveys how necessary it is for us to continue to “take in” our Savior through his Word. In that way we can be **“Filled with the Spirit,”** (Ephesians 5:17b) and live in the wisdom that comes through God's Word.

But there are times when we might be tempted to quit eating and drinking this flesh and blood. Maybe we have grown tired of the menu and just like the Children of Israel, we complain, or worse, quit taking in this nourishment for our souls. Before we know it, our faith withers and grows weak – could even die altogether. Don't let yourself fall into that kind of spiritual weakness, rather take every opportunity to come to the Lord's dinner table and savor the words of our Lord and with the help of the Holy Spirit to keep your faith strong. Continue to come to the dinner table of our Savior because that is where the Food is exactly what we need.

II. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.” A simple truth – Christ remains in us through his Word. Have you ever thought what your life would be like without Christ? There would be no absolute truth – it would be whatever you wanted it to be; probably ever changing. You would have a conscience – everyone does – but it would bother

you when you do something wrong and there would be no relief from the guilt. You might think it would be great not to have any of God's commands and to never hear about sin, but how would you handle the problems of life we all experience? And what about death? How would you handle that?

With Christ in our lives we have the absolute truth of God's Word. It doesn't change and we can count on it. Our conscience would still bother us when we sin, but as we confess our sins, our Savior lifts the guilt off our shoulders and bring us relief. As we view the commands of God through the eyes of faith we can see that His commands are not a burden, but a joy as we thank our God for the salvation that the Holy Spirit brings to us through faith. We will have troubles but we also have the promise of our God that he will be with us and carry us through our troubles. We no longer need to worry about death because we know that death is just the doorway to heaven for the believer.

We live because of Christ. **“This is the bread that came down from heaven.”** He gives us life and sustains us in life. Jesus said, **“Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”** The manna in the desert only took care of temporary needs but God's Word takes care of our eternal needs.

We are receiving the benefits of this living bread right now. Through the flesh and blood of Jesus, our Savior who sacrificed himself for our sins, we have eternal life. This is the Food that we need so, “Come, eat and drink at the Table of our Savior.” You won't be disappointed because, “The Conversation is Stimulating,” and “The Food is Exactly what We Need.” Amen.