

## John 6:51-69 - “The Bread of Eternal Life”

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This morning in our Gospel reading we heard some of the most awesome words of our Lord, especially when they're understood in the context of His divine power and love for us. Where do we know of His divine power and love for us most clearly? Through the cross! Through Jesus Christ's willingness to shed His blood for us—to literally go through hell for us grumbling, never satisfied sinners, so that He can deliver us from our sins and satisfy us completely and eternally by feeding/filling us with His resurrected and eternal life. What incredibly Good News this is for us the more we realize that we are dying sinners and there is no one or nothing in this dying world full of other dying sinners who can save us, except our crucified and risen, “flesh and blood,” divine Savior, Jesus Christ.

Unlike those who first heard Jesus speak the words of our text, we hear Jesus' words in the light of this Good News of the cross—Jesus' death and resurrection for our salvation. So, even though Jesus' words in our text still go beyond our understanding, we can better comprehend (by the grace of God) not only the undying love behind them, but also the power of God's Word and Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper to give and sustain in us our Lord's eternal life.

Jesus said: *“I AM the living bread that came down from heaven.”* This is one of Jesus' *“I AM”* statements, where He identifies Himself as God. *“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.”* Even though the Jews, including Jesus' Jewish disciples, grumbled about these words of our Lord (like God's people in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt), some of them asked a good question, *“How can this man [notice their rejection of Jesus as God]; “How can this [mere] man give us his flesh to eat?”*

In His response, Jesus doesn't make what He said earlier any easier to understand, but He does make an important distinction which answer their questions. *“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 on 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.”*

Notice that instead of referring to His “flesh and blood” together, which commonly refers to the whole person, as in “I'm a flesh and blood person,” Jesus separates His flesh from His blood four times. *“My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.”* What happens when you separate your flesh from your blood? You die!

By saying things like, *“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood,”* separating His flesh from His blood, Jesus is referring to His death on the cross! When does Jesus *“give us His flesh to eat”* separate from His blood, and His blood separate from His body/flesh? In the Lord's Supper, where He says, *“Take eat; this is my body[/flesh]...Take drink, this is my blood..which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”* (Mt 26:26-28).

The only way God could restore in us His true and eternal life is by becoming a man in Jesus Christ so that He could separate His blood from His body and die on a cross in payment for the sins of all people. But then He rises from the dead as our glorious, eternal, flesh and blood Savior to give us His glorious, eternal, reunited flesh and blood life.

Therefore, When we eat Jesus' body and drink His blood in the Lord's Supper (body separated from the blood) He reminds us of His promise that we are receiving all that He earned for us through His death. And by uniting His body and blood together in our bodies when we receive the Lord's Supper, He is reminding us that He did this all for us, to raise us up reunited with Him to life everlasting!

Our human reason grumbles about this truth, or totally rejects it, which is why many Christian denominations think of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper as merely a symbol of Jesus' body and blood. But Jesus didn't say this is a symbol of my body, this is a symbol of my blood, He said: "*This is my body...this is my blood.*" We leave "*is*" as is, believing that Jesus is not only true man but also true and almighty God.

What is a sign that we too grumble against the Word of God and disbelieve what Jesus says in our text and when He instituted the Lord's Supper about giving us His body and blood—the body and blood of God to eat and drink? Whenever we consider the things of this world more important than the gifts that our Lord is present here today to give us to strengthen and keep us in the true faith to life everlasting. The longer a person allows their sinful nature and the good or bad things of this world to distract them from God's gifts of eternal life which He is present in His Word and Sacraments to give and maintain in us, the weaker their faith becomes and the more their sinful nature takes control of their lives.

This is a very real danger in this life for all of us. That's why God, through St. Paul, lovingly instructs the Ephesians and us in our Epistle reading when he says, "*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*" The world is naturally full of "*empty words,*" spoken by men and women who reject the wisdom of God's Word—"*sons of disobedience.*" Their words sound good to our sinful reason, but they cannot give people true and eternal life. Instead they lead us away from the eternal life-giving Word of God.

These empty words of man are gaining more and more followers in our society today, as well as in our public schools. Not only do they seek to teach adults and children the three Rs: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (why it's called the three Rs when only one of these three subjects begin with the letter R is a mystery to me), but they also indoctrinate children with humanistic teaching, which basically says that you can do anything if you put your mind to it. Who is the savior in such thinking? Not the God/Man, Jesus Christ, but sinful man who thinks that he is god.

Therefore, what an incredible blessing to parents and children when we as a congregation are given the faith and resources we need to provide a Christian education for our children and other children in our community. In Redeemer Lutheran School, for example, children will not only be taught the three Rs and more (including how to spell!), but they will also be taught the truth that only God can do all things when He puts His mind to it, including saving us from all sin, death and the doctrine of demons.

Through our Christian Churches and Schools we seek not to live isolated from the world. Instead we seek the Lord's help for ourselves and our children to enable us to be in the world but not of the world—to not be deceived by the "*empty words*" of the world, but instead to boldly and lovingly share with the lost, starving sheep of this world the Bread of eternal life, Jesus Christ.

[Children's Sermon] What's better for your body, this well balanced snack on a stick [bread, cheese, hard boiled quail egg, cherry tomato, bread, strawberry, cherry, grape, bread] or this Cow Tales caramel stick? If you eat a well balanced meal every day, will that stop you from dying? No.

What's the only food that can give you eternal life? [See banner] Jesus said, "I am the bread of life...If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever." How does Jesus give us His eternal life. First He had to get rid of our sins through His death on the cross, then He rose from the dead and now pours Himself into us through our pores when we are Baptized. He also enters into us through our ears when we hear the Good News about Jesus' death and resurrection, or through our eyes when we read this same Good News, and (when we are old enough) through our mouths when we eat the eternally solid food of Jesus' body and blood in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper! At the center of all this bread of life is Jesus, the Word of God in the flesh and in the Bible. That's why we sing: The B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me. I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E!

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.