

John 6:41-59¹
Jesus is the Bread of Life.
12th Sunday after Pentecost
Supplementary Lectionary Series “B,”
Gospels, adapted

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Grace WELS Durand MI
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⁴¹ At this the Jews began to grumble about [Jesus] because he said, “I Am the Bread who came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we ourselves know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

⁴³ “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. ⁴⁴ “No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me, draws² him, and I myself will raise him up at the Last Day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God’ (cf. Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:33b,34). Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him, comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father (cf. John 1:18; 1 John 4:12) except the One who is from God; only he has seen the Father (cf. John 1:1,2,14). 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 This is the Bread who comes down from heaven, so that anyone who eats of him indeed will not die. ⁵¹ I Am the Living Bread who 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 munches³ my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever munches my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I myself in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I myself live because of the Father, so the one who munches on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the Bread who came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who munches this Bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ [Jesus] said this while teaching in the Synagogue in Capernaum.

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

² The Greek vocable $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\sigma\eta$ / from $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\upsilon\omega$, $\epsilon\lambda\kappa\omega$ is used only this once in the New Testament. The classical usage includes drawing a sword or bow, dragging a dead body, drawing or pulling a chariot, drawing or pulling an oar, drawing or dragging someone into court. Clearly, the meaning indicates that this drawing is done to someone by someone else. God draws people to himself through the Gospel, which brings them to faith. It is not by one's own thinking or choosing.

³ Previously, Jesus used the Greek vocable $\epsilon\sigma\theta\iota\omega$ [$\epsilon\sigma\theta\iota\omega$], which means simply to eat; now Jesus uses the Greek vocable $\tau\rho\gamma\omega$ [$\tau\rho\gamma\omega$], which means to gnaw, munch or crunch. Jesus is emphasizing complete and total faith in him alone.

JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, IS “THE BREAD OF LIFE”

I. HE IS CONSUMED BY FAITH

II. HE GIVES LIFE ETERNAL

In the Name of Jesus who is the Bread of Life for us, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Once again, we continue with the thought that Jesus expressed in our text for last Sunday, John 6:22-35, where Jesus proclaimed, “I Am the Bread of Life” (6:35a). As mentioned last time, this is the first of Jesus’ “I Am” statements recorded in John’s Gospel. Jesus makes seven “I Am” statements.

Jesus’ seven “I Am” statements are: “I Am the Bread of Life” (6:35,51); “I Am the Light of the World” (8:12; 9:5); “I Am the Gate for the Sheep” (10:7,9); “I Am the Good Shepherd” (10:11,14); “I Am the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25a); “I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (14:6a); “I Am the Vine” (15:1,5). Jesus will state an eighth time in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I Am.” All of these “I Am” statements of Jesus are solemnly emphatic and echo God’s revelation of himself in Exodus 3:14a, “I AM WHO I AM!” (Hebrew: **hy<h]a, rv, a} hy<h]a**⁴). This revelation of God was later translated as the word “LORD” in all capital letters – a reference to the God of free and faithful grace – the God who loves and forgives those who do not deserve his love and forgiveness. The God of grace, the LORD, is the God of undeserved love. In all of these “I Am” references, Jesus is indicating that the only way to have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation is through him – through faith in him alone as one’s Savior. Jesus states that the only way to benefit from the fact that he is “the Bread of Life” is by complete faith in him. And so, JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, IS “THE BREAD OF LIFE”; I. HE IS CONSUMED BY FAITH; and, II. HE GIVES LIFE ETERNAL.

JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, IS “THE BREAD OF LIFE”

I. HE IS CONSUMED BY FAITH

Recall that Jesus had fed a crowd of more than five thousand (6:10b; cf. Matthew 14:21; Mark 6:44; Luke 9:14) with five loaves of barley bread and two small fish (6:9; cf. Matthew 14:17; Mark 6:38b; Luke 9:13b). On that occasion, the crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make him their king – make him their bread king (cf. 6:15). But, Jesus dismissed the crowd, sent his disciples in a boat westward across the Sea of Galilee toward Capernaum, while Jesus went into the hills by himself as he often did to pray. Later, Jesus walked on water out to the boat in which his disciples were struggling against a contrary wind. The disciples took Jesus into their boat, and they immediately

⁴ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1990.

landed on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus then went to Capernaum, his headquarters during his Galilean ministry, and he taught in the Synagogue (6:59).

The crowd followed Jesus to Capernaum, and Jesus speaks to them and teaches them that he is the Bread of Life who came down from heaven. However,

⁴¹ At this the Jews began to grumble about [Jesus] because he said, “I Am the Bread who came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we ourselves know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” (6:41,42).

Once again, the Jews think that Jesus is speaking about physical bread. They also think that Jesus is merely the son of Joseph and Mary. In reality, Joseph was Jesus’ stepfather; Jesus’ true and real Father is God in heaven. Jesus had been conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:35). The Jews refuse to believe that Jesus is true God, even though they had heard his preaching and seen his miracles, which verified that his teaching was true and his divinity a reality. So, Jesus speaks more emphatically – about physically eating Jesus.

Jesus declared,

⁴⁸ “I Am the Bread of Life.... ⁵⁰ This is the Bread who comes down from heaven, so that anyone who eats of him indeed will not die. ⁵¹ I Am the Living Bread who 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” (6:48,50,51).

Now the Jews are really in an uproar, for they to think that Jesus is speaking about physically him. So, they think Jesus is talking about cannibalism!

“Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’” (6:52). Jesus becomes even more emphatic:

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.... ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever munches my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I myself in him.... ⁵⁸ This is the Bread who came down from heaven (6:53,55,56,58a).

The Jews continue to refuse to understand that about which Jesus is talking. Jesus has already told them that about which he was teaching them, when he said, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I Am the Bread of Life” (6:47,48). Jesus had said the same thing earlier in this “Bread of Life Discourse.” He told the Jews, “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:40). By eating his flesh and drinking his blood, Jesus was telling the Jews that they had to have complete and total faith in him

alone as their Savior. Moreover, that faith in Jesus was not something that the Jews or anyone else could manufacture in themselves.

Jesus told the Jews, “No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me, draws him” (6:44a). By stating this, Jesus was indicating that the power of God had to draw, drag or pull a person into faith in Jesus, for, by nature, all people were opposed to God, enemies of God, and dead in transgressions and sins. Moreover, this being drawn to the Father, took place through Jesus’ Word.

Jesus says, “It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God’ (cf. Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:33b,34). Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him, comes to me” (6:45). This truth was taking place right now before the very eyes and into the very ears of the Jews, for with the Father and the Holy Spirit Jesus is true God. The Jews were hearing the very Word of God through Jesus, God’s Son.

APPROPRIATION

There is, in addition, another aspect of what Jesus is saying that we need to understand. Jesus says:

⁵³ ... 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 munches [totally consumes] my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever munches my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I myself in [remain] him.... ⁵⁷ the one who munches on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the Bread who came down from heaven.... he who munches on this Bread will live forever” (cf. 6:53-58).

When Jesus says this, he is not speaking about Holy Communion, in which a person eats and drinks Jesus’ true body and true blood – in, with, and under, bread and wine.

Jesus is not speaking about Holy Communion in this text from John Chapter Six. First of all, Jesus had not yet instituted Holy Communion. Secondly, Jesus says that the one who “munches [totally] consumes” his flesh “and drinks [his] blood has eternal life.” “Whoever munches [Jesus’] flesh and drinks [his] blood remains in [Jesus] and [Jesus] himself [remains] in him.” Unfortunately, this is not true about every one who takes Holy Communion.

Some people partake of Holy Communion without faith in Jesus. They, therefore, receive Holy Communion to their judgment (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29). Think of all those who, at one time, have been confirmed here at Grace Lutheran Church and have fallen away. At one time, they too received Holy Communion but no longer remain in faith in Jesus. Many fall away. In our text, Jesus is referring to those who remain in him by faith and in whom Jesus therefore remains as their LORD and Savior. In John Chapter Six, Jesus is referring to the fact that a person must have total and complete faith and trust in him alone.

Thus to eat, munch, gnaw and crunch Jesus' flesh and to drink his blood, means to have total faith in Jesus alone as one's Savior. This is what you have, dear friends.

As you have faith in Jesus, you are partaking of Jesus' flesh and blood – again not referring to Holy Communion, which, in itself, is a wonderful gift for our benefit. Rather, here in our text, Jesus is referring to simple faith in him in which you must continue for eternal life. Moreover, remember how this faith in Jesus has come to you and continues in you.

St. Paul wrote to the Romans, "Faith comes from hearing the Message, and the Message is heard through the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The Word of Christ is the Message – the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus' saving work for you. This faith is created in you through the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who has created faith in Jesus in your heart. St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the LORD, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the Truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our Gospel, that you might share in the Glory of our LORD Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by Word of mouth or by Letter [i.e. Epistle] (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15).

St. Paul credits the Holy Spirit as working through the Truth of God's Word – through the Gospel, to bring a person to faith in Jesus. This truth coordinates with Jesus' statement that no one can come to him unless the Father draws him (cf. 6:44). In addition, when St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by Word of mouth or by Letter [that is, Epistle]," St. Paul is stating that a person must continue in the faith that has been created in his or her heart and never fall away from it (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6). As you are hearing God's Word today, the Holy Spirit is creating, continuing, and strengthening your faith in Jesus alone as your Savior. You are being drawn to Jesus as your LORD and Savior.

The Holy Spirit has created faith in your heart in Jesus your Savior. The result of that faith is eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, IS "THE BREAD OF LIFE" II. HE GIVES LIFE ETERNAL

Once again, we are reminded that Jesus is not speaking about Holy Communion in these words, for many who have received Holy Communion here and elsewhere did not continue in faith in Jesus. At the same time, Jesus is emphatic that complete and total faith in him alone does give eternal life.

Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life” (6:47). Jesus said this previously: “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:40). Jesus will speak this truth again,

⁴⁸ I Am the Bread of Life.... ⁵⁰ This is the Bread who comes down from heaven, so that anyone who eats of him indeed will not die. ⁵¹ I Am the Living Bread who 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....

⁵³ ... “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 munches my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever munches my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I myself in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I myself live because of the Father, so the one who munches on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the Bread who came down from heaven” (6:48,50,51,53-58).

As Jesus is speaking about having total and complete faith in him alone – that is what he is referring to when he speaks about eating, munching, gnawing, crunching his flesh and drinking his blood – so also Jesus is saying that such total and complete faith in him gives eternal life.

Jesus has already indicated how a person comes to have complete and total faith in him, when he said, “No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me, draws him, and I myself will raise him up at the Last Day” (6:44). The Holy Spirit is sent out from the Father and from his Son Jesus (cf. 15:26). The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel. Those who have that Gospel, believe it, meditate on it, inwardly digest it – have eternal life and will be raised on the Last Day to enjoy that eternal life in heaven with Jesus. Jesus contrasts this eternal life, which he, the Bread of Life, gives – he contrasts it with the manna that the Jews of the Old Testament received and ate.

For forty years while the Jews wandered in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, they received manna from heaven. Jesus pointed out to the Jews, “Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died” (6:49, 58b). Jesus, referring to himself, went on to say,

⁵⁰ This is the Bread who comes down from heaven, so that anyone who eats of him indeed will not die. ⁵¹ I Am the Living Bread who 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” (6:50,51).

Jesus’ flesh is true food, and his blood is true drink (cf. 6:55). True food and true drink sustains not physical life but eternal life. Eternal life is what Jesus gives.

APPROPRIATION

Through Jesus' Word, you have true food and true drink – you have Jesus. Having Jesus in your hearts by faith means that Jesus will raise you up from your graves on the Last Day and give you eternal life in heaven with him. This is the Gospel. Complete and total faith in Jesus through this Gospel, gives you this eternal life. And yet, how often is your faith weak, and you are uncertain?

Many times in our lives we may wonder if we really do have faith in Jesus. We are faced with dilemmas, uncertainties, and questions. Life has twists and turns which tempt us to doubt. We see and sense our own inadequacies – our sinfulness. We are tempted to wonder if we have faith enough. That is when we must turn away from looking inwardly to looking outward to God's Word and our Savior, Jesus.

Remember that Jesus said, "No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me, draws him, and I myself will raise him up at the Last Day" (6:44). The Father has drawn you to himself by the Gospel, which you are hearing and believing. The Holy Spirit works through that Gospel to create faith in Jesus in your heart. When you look at your own faith, then you will see weakness and inadequacy. When, however, you look at the One who creates that faith in you; and, look at the one in whom your faith has been placed – Jesus Christ, your Bread of Life – then you have solid assurance and certainty that you have eternal life. You have eternal life through faith in Jesus alone.

You have eternal life in Jesus now. Oh, now you are not enjoying the full benefits of that eternal life. That will come when God lays your body in dust and ashes, and takes your soul to heaven. Then, on the Last Day, Jesus will raise you from your graves – from your dust and ashes – so that you will live eternally in glory with Jesus forever.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is your Bread of Life. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood, that is, by totally and completely believing in him, he will raise you up on the Last Day and give you eternal life in heaven with him in body and soul. You have this faith in Jesus through the Gospel. The Holy Spirit has created this faith in Jesus in your heart – it is not a result of your own thinking, choosing, merit, effort or works. Remain in God's Word by which Jesus remains in you, and you remain in him for eternal life. Amen.