

**If Any Man Eats of This Bread,
He Shall Live Forever**

John 6:47-69, Trinity Sunday XI
July 8, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....as Christians we know that often when we speak God's Word to the world, the world does not listen. OH! how it grieves our heart, to see people that we care for turn a deaf ear when we speak the words of our beloved Jesus. It is just as John writes, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." I John 4:6 The Spirit of Truth is the Comforter, the Holy Ghost who filled the early Church with His Word on the day of Pentecost. It is this same Spirit of Truth which lives in the hearts of all true believers this day. Sadly, the spirit of error lives in the heart of all unbelievers, when they refuse to repent of their sins and believe the Gospel.

God's children on the other hand desire God's Word for only by the Gospel do our souls find peace and rest in the midst of all trials and tribulations. Dear Christian, please remember in the midst of troubles, Jesus grants you peace. Jesus is the Bread of Life which came down from heaven. He is the Living Bread who freely gave His life for the world. Whoever eats of this Bread will never hunger and indeed they will live forever. Jesus said "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." He came down from heaven that we might believe on Him and ascend up into heaven, having everlasting life. Jesus said "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

I. What does it mean - to eat His flesh and drink His blood? In our lesson today, when Jesus spoke of the Bread of Life which came down from heaven, the Jews did not understand. How can this "son of Joseph" come down from heaven? They didn't understand because they didn't know the Father. Jesus said "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." When the Word of God came to these people, though it fell upon their ears, they would not permit God's Word to enter their hearts. They resisted the Holy Ghost. They heard what Jesus was saying with their ears, but they did not believe it in the heart. They were proud people. They didn't consider themselves sinners in desperate need of a Savior.

The Father draws sinners to Himself by the persuasive power of His Word. He does not give us His commandments so that we can see how good we are, but His commandments reveal our sin. And no man can hide his sins from God. The Bible teaches beyond all doubt, that if we stubbornly cling to our sins and defend our evil, God will punish us with damnation when we die. Just as a toddler son should not resent a father when the

father warns him what will happen if he touches that boiling pot of water on the stove, so we should not resent God for telling us the truth about our own sins and God's burning wrath against them. He tells us the truth for our own good and we ought to listen. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. Yet we should understand we don't go to Christ on our own, but it is the inviting words of Christ which draw us to His salvation. Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." In His Word there is spirit and life, even life everlasting, for God's Word brings us Christ. Therefore "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." We gladly receive God's Word when we see Jesus came down from heaven to save us from sin. It is His Gospel Word which grafts us to the vine. Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches." In 15:5 We are grafted or joined to Christ as soon as we believe that God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

In our text today Jesus said something which puzzles us. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." What does this mean, to eat His flesh and drink His blood? These words do not apply to communion, for we are not saved from our sins by the act of communing. In fact the Bible teaches that those who commune and do not believe or are not sorry for their sins, such eat and drink damnation to themselves. Therefore when Jesus is speaking of the absolute necessity of eating his flesh and drinking His blood, He is speaking of the necessity of faith! Luther rightly said, "When Christ is preached as having given His body in death for our sins and as having shed His blood, and when I accept this truth into my heart, this is to eat and drink His body and blood. To eat is then, in this passage to believe. He that believes also eats and drinks Christ!"

What must be emphasized here is the human nature of Christ. Jesus Christ is God incarnate in the flesh, meaning that God added or joined to His divine nature, a human nature. God and Man are one in Jesus. As God Jesus came to this earth, and humbled Himself upon the cross, that He might deliver us from sin and death. Thus to eat His flesh and drink His blood is to believe and accept Jesus Christ to be God and man forever united! Jesus said "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." As God has eternal life, through faith we are made partakers of that eternal life. Jesus has breathed everlasting life into our soul. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

II. Does His Word offend you? When Jesus said these words in the synagogue, many were offended. "When they had heard this, [they] said, This is an hard saying;

who can hear it?" Even many of His own disciples were offended. What offended them especially was that Jesus claimed to come down from heaven, thus making Himself equal with God. Jesus knew what they were thinking. "He said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" Jesus is saying "If you saw me rise up into heaven, then would you believe?"

What offended Jews and disciples alike was Jesus' own claim to be Almighty God. While they thought Him a great prophet, it was simply too much for them to believe He was the Bread of Life which came down from heaven. Thus the ungodly, or the unbeliever, will always be offended by God's Word. God's Word is foolishness to the unbeliever. I Corinthians 1:18 says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." To those who believe, God's Word brings salvation, for His Word brings Christ!

The believer delights in God's Word according to the New Man. For the New Man "is created in righteousness and holiness." When God's Spirit lives in the heart by way of faith, the New Man rejoices saying "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." As Christians however we should understand that because of our old Adam within, our own heart can deceive us. Therefore we should not follow our heart, nor our feelings, but we follow God's Word alone. "It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

We then as God's children, cherish the truth. If we are confused or troubled in life about anything, we need only open our Bible for guidance and pray the Holy Spirit through the Word will lead us. Even when people of the world challenge our faith, or belittle the Bible, we should not budge, but firmly believe. We never need apologize for speaking the truth. When many of Jesus' own disciples forsook Him because He said He was the Bread of Life, Jesus didn't change His teachings, but held fast to the Word. So in life, we simply speak God's Word to others. It is not our work to move the heart, but the work of the Holy Spirit. Again Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The Spirit works through the Word.

III. Believers are in constant communion with God

When Jesus spoke the truth concerning Himself, many disciples forsook this Bread of Life. Jesus said to the twelve "Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life! And we believe are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." What a glorious confession Peter made! Where else could they go? Jesus was the Bread of Life, the heavenly Son of God, who came down from heaven giving life everlasting to the world! Peter was united to Christ by faith, as all

Christian are today.

Indeed, by faith in Christ alone, there is a blessed union between each believer and God. Jesus spoke of this union saying, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." To eat His flesh and drink His blood is to believe in Him, and to believe in Him is to live in Him and He in us! Indeed it is a most intimate and close communion each believer enjoys, being united and joined to God by faith! God literally dwells and lives in each believing heart, and we also live in Him, for He is the head of the Church. We should never then feel as if God is far away, or unconcerned with our cares and troubles in life, for indeed Jesus is with us always, God is always near, therefore let us trust in Him and not be afraid. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Prov. 3:5 The Bible says, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us." Ps. 62:8 By faith we are a part of Christ's own body, whom He cherishes, nurtures, and loves. Our communion with Him is close, constant, and blessed: fear not, only believe.

Truly, Jesus is that Bread of Life which came down from heaven. "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Ps. 34:8 Indeed it is a "close communion" because it is a public confession of our unity in faith. We believe, teach, and confess the full truth of God's holy Word. What greater testimony could there be of unity of faith than Holy Communion? But let us especially rejoice that in this holy Sacrament God comforts our hearts, granting us spiritual peace. We have a treasure here which far surpasses any earthly treasure, for we have God's own body and blood as tokens and testimonies of His forgiveness. God instituted this sacrament "to console and comfort terrified minds, when they believe that the flesh of Christ, given for the life of the world, is food, when they believe that, being joined to Christ [through this food], they are made alive." (Apol. Augs. Conf. XXII) Beloved of the Lord, by faith receive His body and blood today and be assured that all Thy sins be forgiven thee. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." Amen.

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