

John 6:51-58  
August 19, 2018

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

For weeks we have been slowly meandering along through the sixth chapter of John. We have chewed on the metaphorical language Jesus uses to describe himself doing our best to absorb his teachings. We have savored morsels of words full of life and promise such as:

*“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (v.35)*

*“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 them up at the last day.” (v.40)*

*Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. (v.47-48)*

We have been fed through the spoken words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the words put on paper through the hands of John so that we too, might, come to believe and have eternal life. But, is this it? Is there more than the eye might see here? The ears might hear?

Perhaps, this morning we come to the most difficult portion of this entire chapter as Jesus continues to refer to himself as the bread of life come down to earth; however, he seems to push yet even further the imagery and significance

of just what it means that He, the Son of God, has come down to earth and taken upon himself the mortal flesh and blood of humanity. Is believing in Jesus simply enough or is there more to this relationship he invites us into? Just what is Jesus getting at and why is John so intent in his gospel of lifting up this repeated theme that Jesus is the bread of life and that his followers are to take into their beings the fullness of who he is; even to the point of saying these words, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.” (v.54) This is challenging stuff here and debates have waged ever since John recalled these words and placed them in his gospel. Words not found in Matthew, Mark or Luke.

Many are quick to point out John was writing to counter a doctrine that was surfacing in his context known as Docetism. In essence, those adherents to this doctrine in John’s day contended Jesus merely seemed human in appearance as if he was some sort of apparition. They rejected Jesus’ humanity. Docetism eventually came to be deemed heretical at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Knowing this, one can see in our text this morning John’s adherence to his understanding and theology of the incarnation that Jesus was fully human. Flesh and blood. The very person of God coming to earth to take upon the fullness of humanity. It was this very flesh and blood that cried out in the midst of a dark night in the confines

of a stable that first Christmas. It was this very flesh and blood that performed signs and miracles, which only God could do. It was this very flesh and blood that walked along dirty, dusty roads that eventually led him to a cross at Golgotha where the blood ran forth from his side and he exhaled his final breath prior to his death. And it is his flesh and blood that was raised from the tomb on Easter morning.

For John, the thought Jesus was not human simply was incomprehensible. There is more to Jesus than simply an outward expression that he was a human. No, he was fully human. This is what changed the relationship between God and humanity. This was a new beginning in how God came to all God created. To know Jesus is so much more than simply believing. It seems Jesus teaches and John recalls and emphasizes that being human and being in relationship with Jesus is about taking all of Jesus into every cell of our very beings.

On the second to last day of confirmation camp at EWALU a couple weeks back the group spent time making bread for our worship later that evening, which included the celebration and sharing of the Lord's Supper. Whether or not this passage speaks about the sacrament of holy communion or not it is hard not to make the connection to it. This meal is a gift from our Lord. An experience to see, touch and taste. An encounter with his presence in a unique way as we gather

together as his body and recall just how much his love for humanity cost through his broken body and his blood spilled forth and given for the sins of the world.

This meal is real.

That's why I loved the making of the bread. There is a rawness to it just like there is rawness in this passage. You take the elements of wheat, water, salt, molasses and honey the recipe called for, mix it with your hands and in turn they get sticky and covered with dough. Some flour might even be spilled on the table. You then work that dough into a ball, place it on a pan, and flatten it with your palm. Then you mark it with a cross and bake it in the oven. This is real stuff. Messy at times but then beautiful when you smell the aroma, eat the bread, taste its goodness and be filled with nourishment it provides and the promises offered in this meal. This might be an analogy for what God has done in Jesus. Takes something a bit messy, the cross and death, and then transforms it into life – beautiful and good.

But this act of making bread may also be an image of a life of faith in Jesus Christ. It's real and alive and messy and beautiful and full of goodness. It's sweet and savory and our experiences and relationships nourish us and help us grow. Jesus offers all of that. We are to absorb and feed off everything he gives. For he is the bread of life.

As I stated earlier, so much time has been spent trying to make sense of this passage. It's created debate and disputes. Yet, perhaps the church would do well to simply focus on the promises found within it and be fed, strengthened, and nourished by those. Be filled yet again with the wonderful benefits in the bread of life Jesus offers. Notice, many of these are in the present tense. They happen here and now!

- You have life in yourself (v. 53 -- present tense)
- You have eternal life (v. 54 -- present tense)
- You will be raised by Jesus on the last day (v. 54 -- future tense)
- You remain in Jesus and he in you (v. 56 -- present tense)
- You will live through Jesus (v. 57 -- future tense)
- You will live forever (v. 58 -- future tense)<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Brian Stoffregen, [www.crossmarks.com](http://www.crossmarks.com)