

John 6:51-69

Our text for today is the end of Jesus' discourse on bread.

As we have talked about, Jesus is pushing back against the crowds who have now began to follow Him not because he offers them His Word, but simply because of the bread to feed their stomachs.

And so over the past few weeks we have talked about how we are not immune to this. We have tried to admit that, should we be starving somewhere, we probably would be pretty desperate too! We'd probably whine a little too!

We've talked about how we are not immune to the temptation to put the gifts (the bread, the food, the entertainment, and so on) above the Gift Giver, God.

No, too often we too are distracted by such things. "God if you loved me, you would give me all things things I want, and need, right?" We are not immune to this.

And in those ways we join the crowds in losing sight of the fact that the bread for the stomach that Jesus miraculously and abundantly gives was to serve a purpose – to show them that he, and he alone, is the one who could give abundant sustaining bread of eternal life to all.

This is no different than his healing miracles. Those people he healed in his earthly ministry got sick again, and died. Is Jesus just a death “delayer”? Does he just push it back a little bit if you pray right? He’ll give you some food and a healing if you somehow earn his favor?

No, he is not a death delayer, he is a death destroyer. Yes he knows we need food, yes he knows we need healing. Of course he knows that, he made us! And that is precisely why he works in the big picture, to make it so you are fed and healthy *forever*.

The reality is, however, we can’t do that here. This world is broken, we are broken. So he has to see us all and all things made new again.

How is that done? By bringing us to himself, uniting us with himself, the One who is greater than death. It’s there in the text: “As the LIVING Father sent me, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.” The Father, obviously, is immortal and omnipotent God. And Jesus is begotten of him, which is a fancy word for being of the same nature. So humans make tables, but we beget children – more humans, of the same nature of us. And so Jesus, the Son of God, begotten of God, shares His Father’s nature: God. Which therefore means Jesus too is immortal, and omnipotent. And he has come to

be grasped, quite literally, that we might be united with Him to receive his immortality.

You are what you eat – a bit tongue in cheek, but quite real. You want immortality, feast, be united with, the immortal One.

At the end of Jesus' discourse on bread, he uses a graphic and dramatic illustration to wrench the people's focus away from the bread of their stomachs, to himself, the bread that sustains to eternal life.

And the move is so drastic, the language so charged, that some are unable to stick the landing. "I just came here for some bread, and now this guy is talking about eating him... Which is not only weird, but against the Old Testament laws. I'm out of here, a free meal isn't worth listening to this crazy guy."

That's a hard teaching.

We, in the New Covenant of course, see it's fulfillment of this hard teaching in the resurrection and the communion rail. But, I think there are other passages in scripture that we find as "hard teachings." In our day and age, when society races one way, and we are left with our Lord's teachings on ordination, or sexuality, or truth... isn't easy to compromise a little on those hard teachings

so we can be more “relevant,” or “welcoming,” “we don’t want people to turn away do we!”

Jesus wrenches us back to himself. “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” What would you say then? When you see him face to face. “Everyone was doing it!” “I meant well...”

Jesus knows there will be rejection. He knew it when he gave this teaching about the bread. He knows who has come for the free meal, and who has come for the free eternal life, which is what he longs to give us!

Cheesy preacher move: Why are you here? Because your parents made you? Because it’s socially acceptable? Because it earns you something? To learn some morals? Because it appeals to some base instinct of yours for culture or community? And is that much better than bread for a stomach?

Or because there is life here? Life found sitting at the feet of Jesus, who is here, by the way – and everywhere two or more are gathered in his name. So yes, life is here, hearing his Word, hearing of his Work on the cross, hearing of his Resurrection, his forgiveness. Life is found receiving his gifts- gifts even, yes, of Body and Blood.

You heard Peter's response: "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the Word of eternal life?" Where else are you finding that? Sure there are other's selling it – "cryo freeze your brain!" "Take this supplement for youth!" "Try this god who will have you work for heaven... "

Peter sees a hard teaching, yes, but he sees the Messiah, the Savior of the World, God come to conquer death and he says, because there is no other choice, because there is no other road to life and because the Father has called him (and he has called you too!), there is no other choice... "Where else could we go?"

This same Savior is still with his people, where two or more are gathered, this same Savior is still the bread of life, eat of his body, drink of his blood, be One with the Immortal One, receive the gifts of the One stronger than death. You don't deserve it, no. But that doesn't change the fact he went to a cross, to a tomb, through death to life, so it could all be yours. In the name of Jesus, Amen.