

## **“LIVING AT THE TABLE.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**March 6, 2022, 10:30 AM**

### **Texts for the Sermon: John 6:48-58**

Holy Father, we come to your Word hungry for true bread, bread that satisfies our soul's deepest hunger. Give to all of us now ready hearts to receive what your Spirit would say to us. Give us understanding and insight that matches the clarity and excellency of your Holy Word. Amen.

#### **Introduction.**

Last week we considered how to be Christians who live under water, under the water of our baptism. We said as water is essential for physical life so water is essential for spiritual life. We talked about daily living out our baptism by remembering it and by improving it.

This week it is appropriate to consider how to be Christians who live at the table of our Lord. Food and drink are essential for physical life and food and drink are essential for spiritual life.

Some of us don't really consider how important this meal is and what it signifies. For some of us this may be an empty ritual.

I remember when I was a child and thought like a child, when I would come into church on a Sunday morning with my family and saw the table piled with plates, I would think, “Oh, great, the service is going to be long this morning.”

I didn't know Jesus, I didn't understand the things of the spirit. I didn't know my spiritual need. I was no better than the Jews who didn't understand what in the world Jesus was talking about.

#### **John 6:48-58, The Bread of Life Discourse of Jesus.**

The Gospel of John is the only gospel that does not have an account of the institution of the Lord's Supper by Jesus in the Upper Room on Passover. But John is the only Gospel writer to give us an account of a major teaching of Jesus about His body and blood as bread and drink.

Jesus makes Himself plain to us by using parables, metaphors, analogies, earthy illustrations of spiritual truth. He often uses things drawn from our life, and not just random things, but things that are very common and important to us.

This discourse comes after Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand.

They saw a great miracle and they are fixating on the miracle. It makes them think about another great miracle, a greater one really. The feeding not five thousand, but millions, and not once but every day for 40 years. Show us another miracle.

They weren't looking at the person who did the miracle. They wanted a useful Jesus, a genie in the bottle Jesus, a Jesus who gives them what they want.

Jesus obviously cares about our physical needs after all He fed the five thousand, but Jesus is much more concerned about our spiritual needs.

From the conversations taking place around Him it is clear the people are seeking earthly and perishable food when what they really need is the imperishable Bread of Life that is standing in front of them. The issue is not bread but Jesus.

They ask for bread and Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." Jesus didn't come to give bread, He came to be bread.

### **I am the bread of life.**

Jesus makes a comparison between Himself and the manna that came down from heaven. He says the manna is inferior to what He offers in Himself.

Manna, as miraculous as it was, falling from heaven every day for 40 years, and as useful as it was for keeping them alive in the wilderness, failed in two ways. First, it didn't do anything for the soul, and second, it was not able keep those who ate it from dying. The manna offered no lasting benefit.

The food and drink that we have every day never completely satisfies.

Think of the very best meal you have ever had. The Kensington club steak at Steak and Ale, that steak at Ruth's Chris in Minneapolis about 25 years ago, worth every bit of the \$70 I paid. The twenty-course meal at the Willows where Todd works, that people pay hundreds for, definitely a dining experience, but the next day we were hungry again. No lasting benefit.

Think of the best vacation you have ever had. What is it now but a fading memory. We have booked a trip to see Reed and Jenea and grandson Kohen the end of the month. I am really looking forward to that vacation. But I am keenly aware it will be over very quickly and become yet another fading memory.

You can buy the finest of clothes and they will wear out or go out of fashion.  
You can buy the highest quality products but none of them will last forever.  
You can win the state basketball tournament, but in a few months, that satisfaction is gone and you are chasing the next win.

Apart from Jesus Christ nothing, nothing in this life provides lasting satisfaction, comfort, peace and rest. Nothing in this life can give what only Christ can give, don't expect it too.

Jesus states this in some of His most controversial words, controversial then when He spoke them, and even to this day countless people wrestle with His meaning.

What makes them so controversial is Jesus uses vivid, graphic language about eating flesh and drinking blood and not just any flesh or blood, but His own flesh and blood.

This was scandalous to the Jews since the Law of Moses forbade drinking blood or eating meat with blood still in it.

What does Jesus mean by "my flesh and my blood?"

*Let's begin with what this does not mean.*

Jesus said things that to the finite unspiritual mind were hard to understand.

**John 3:3-4** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

**John 6:52-53** The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So 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."

This does not mean the literal eating of Jesus' flesh and the literal drinking of His blood. Jesus is not promoting cannibalism.

Also, this is not a direct reference to the Lord's Supper. No physical action of eating or drinking can save us. So when Jesus says unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you, He is not talking about His table, He is not saying what we do here saves us.

*What does this mean?*

**John 6:35** Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Jesus is saying that in order to be saved we must come to Jesus, we must believe in Jesus. ***Believing is eating, believing is drinking.*** Our souls feed on Christ by faith, just as our bodies feed on bread by eating. The eating and drinking are the receiving into our soul's faith that Christ died for me and saved me from death to life.

**John 6:51** The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

He doesn't say "I have given" or "I do give" but "I will give." The flesh He speaks of is not His incarnation, His coming in the flesh, but His flesh and blood He will offer on the cross in sacrificial death as a lifegiving atonement for the sins of the world.

**John 6:40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

**How do we eat His flesh and drink His blood?**

***First, living at the table means having an appetite for Jesus.***

**Matthew 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Do you hunger and thirst for Jesus as much as you do for a hamburger and fries or a steak and baked potato or a Dairy Queen blizzard or a salted caramel mocha latte with 2 pumps of vanilla?

Like Peter do we long for the pure spiritual milk of Christ and His salvation? (I Peter 2:2-3). Like the Psalmist do our souls thirst for the living God? (Psalm 42:2).

We live at the table by having more of a hunger for Jesus than the things of the world.

***Second, living at the table means following your appetite and actually eating.***

A book you have never read remains external to you and of no value or benefit to you. But when you read that book it becomes internal, you can reflect on it, use what you learned from it.

Faith in Jesus is not compared with thinking about or admiring, but with eating.

Seeing a loaf of bread on a plate will not satisfy our hunger.

Knowing the ingredients in the bread will not satisfy our hunger.

Taking pictures of the bread will not satisfy our hunger.

**John 6:53** 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.

Is Christ as real and important and indispensable to you as your next meal, as your daily bread?

Make His Word your food, make prayer your drink. Make His sacraments His reminders to live constantly under the water of your baptism and the food and drink of His table.

What we taste and touch here is not what is most important? Who it points to is. This table is given to us by Jesus so we never forget the core truth of what we believe. He is the bread.

***Third, living at the table means delighting ourselves in Christ.***

Have you ever had really good bread? I mean really, really good bread? I have had a lot of really good bread in my lifetime. Nothing beats good homemade bread.

But I to this day remember the very best bread I ever had. It was October 1995, my first trip to Tirana, Albania in the home of Von and Sue Golder. The bread was from a little hole in the wall bake shop. Sue had to make a couple of return trips to keep up with me. I remember delighting in that bread and wishing there was a way I could take it home.

The glory of bread is that it satisfies our hunger for bread.

The glory of water is that it quenches our thirst.

The glory of Christ is He satisfies all our deepest needs.

And we honor Him when we are satisfied in Him.

We honor Him by bringing our hungers and our thirsts to Him.

We honor Him when we feed on Him and drink from Him with joy.

We honor and glorify Jesus when we find Him to be more soul satisfying than the best bread.

Are we truly satisfied with Christ? Has He satisfied the deepest longings of our hearts? Is He better to you than life?

***Fourth, living at the table means continuing to partake and participate in Christ.***

What happens to food and drink when we take it into our body? It becomes part of us, it is incorporated into our physical system to our benefit, health, strength. A plant or an animal has given its life to us.

When we receive Christ by faith, there is just as intimate a union between our souls and Christ as food is with our body. Jesus wants His presence with us to be that tangible, that real.

Jesus goes so far as to say it compares to the union between God the Father and God the Son.

**John 6:57** As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

By faith Christ abides in us and we abide in Him. He *dwells* in us. We are intimately joined to Him.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.* And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This feeding on Christ by faith and this abiding in Christ are meant to be as daily as our eating and drinking are. When we eat and drink we feel refreshed, nourished. So it is when we truly trust and believe, we are nourished with hope, confidence, peace.

***What does the opposite of living at the table of Christ look like?***

When we go through our days grumbling or complaining about how hard life is or how bad a hand we have been dealt or whining about how we can never catch a break like other people who don't even deserve it. When we live like the children of Israel grumbling and complaining in the wilderness how hard life is, even while they are out collecting God's daily provision of fresh manna.

This life is hard, and it is getting harder. There are always enemies of our souls to fight. Jesus said in this life we would have afflictions, trials, troubles, even war, persecution, economic hardship, inflation, high gas prices, temptation, sickness, or death.

Do we realize that whatever affliction we face in our world, they never take away what Christ has given us? Death tried to kill Christ and failed, and death will fail to harm or kill those in whom Christ dwells. Truly if Christ is for us and in us, what can be against us?

### **Conclusion.**

We live at His table of abundant life when we receive Him and live in Him and by Him by faith. We have living bread, sent by a living Father, we are indwelt by the living Holy Spirit. We have the glorious promise of living forever in glory.

We have food and drink the world knows nothing of. Something far greater than manna. We have a place at His table. "Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

**Psalm 73:25-26** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.