

Eating His Flesh and Drinking His Blood

John 6:53-59

It will help us to have several pictures in our minds as we think together about these words that Jesus spoke to us. Think first of the most exquisite experience of bread eating that you have ever had. Just last Wednesday, Darlene made the pineapple upside down cake for Family Night. Cake is bread right? It's just sweet bread. Anyway, the cakes were made and I was down there setting up when the urge to have a piece of that cake rose up within my soul. So I channeled my inner Michael Alcorn, cut off a corner piece, and I ate it. You know how the sugar in the cake carmelizes in the corners where the cake is a little thinner? It was incredible. If I think about it, I can still taste it. So the people in attendance at the synagogue in Capernaum were those who had eaten Jesus' bread as he passed it out on the seashore the day before.

Next, think about feeding a big, hungry dog a bowl of dog food. This is a dog that hasn't eaten for a day or two. It a dog that never needs more than a couple minutes to finish a big bowl of dog food and this time it is actually hungry. Watch as the dog dives in, with teeth and tongue and saliva. Bruner translates the beginning of verse 54, "Indeed the person who is feasting on my flesh and drinking down my blood..." The word translated feasting is a word that would be used of an animal gulping down its food.

Next, think about the difference between real food and fake food. Can you tell the difference between imitation crab and real crab meat? Can you tell the difference between homemade scratch cake and boxed cake? Real icing and canned frosting for the cake? Imitation vanilla vs real vanilla? Can you tell the

difference between real love and manipulation? Between the truth and a lie? Jesus said that His flesh was real food and that His blood was the real drink that satisfies thirst.

Next, think about a person you want to be close to. I mean in a physical way. Not sexually, but a person you want to be close to, someone who you can hold and be

held by them with a sense of wanting nothing else. When close to this person you find yourself wanting nothing else. Jesus said that when we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we abide in Him.

Think of a couple you know who are very close. Or, two friends who are tight and let nothing come between them. You might have said to your spouse, "I wish we could be like that couple" or of the friends, you might have thought, "I wish I had a friend like that." Jesus pointed to His relationship with the Father and said that if you will feed on Me you could receive from Me what I receive from My Father.

Think of the wonder experienced that first morning when Israel came out of their tents and the manna was on the ground like dew. Cautiously, they looked it over calling it manna (what is it?) Bread from heaven is what it was. The loving Father reaching down and feeding them in a barren desert where there was no food. Jesus said to them, "I am bread from heaven sent down from above to feed you in a place and time where there is no food." As their forefathers had once asked, "What is it?" This was the time for them to ask, "Who is it?" and to feast on God's provision. For those who did there was eternal life.

Again, we should read this Scripture two ways. These are first the words spoken by Jesus in a synagogue in the town of Capernaum on the shore of Galilee. Those in attendance were largely the people who had been fed on the occasion of the feeding of the 5000 and they were determined as much as they could to see the days of bread from heaven return to Israel. To make sense of Jesus' words would be to take His flesh and blood to signify His whole person. Eating and drinking Him would be to eagerly take in all that He taught and did. He was bread from heaven. He was to be feasted upon. He was for real. There was never anyone as genuine as He. He was the fleshing out of God's loving care for His people and for the desperate and needy in the entire world. To be in the place where He was at the time that He was and to taste the food that He gave and to see the works that He did and hear the words that He spoke, this was unique. It was a moment. It was the best ever and to treasure that for what it was would be to gobble it up like the way a dog eats. The eternal one had come to the earth with the purpose of turning earthly dust into heaven's gold.

But these were also the words written by John for the church. By then, the substance of the gospel was clear and the church was practicing then as now the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice through offering of His flesh and the shedding of His blood. The last supper had become the communion meal. He took the bread and broke it and said, "Take, eat. This is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Then He took the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." To those who met together to celebrate the supper in houses and in caves and catacombs, in fields and in forests and in desert hideouts, John wrote these words reminding the church that eating Jesus'

flesh and drinking His blood was required for life in the Son. We believe that Jesus' body was broken for us and that his blood was shed to wash away our sin and we accept His gift and partake of His salvation and we are saved! In fact, we feast on His flesh and blood. We eat voraciously of His forgiveness and internalize all of the promises now ours through His gift of our salvation. We are surrounded by deceptions and false hopes but Jesus is real. Eat at the world's table and you can stuff yourself all you want but you will still be empty. Eat of Christ, drink of Him and you will be satisfied. Those who drink the living water never thirst again.

To eat and drink of Christ is to abide in Him. This means that we are sustained by our connection with Christ. Drawing strength from His proximity, we go out to face the world and to work in the mission He has called us to do. How does Christ sustain us? By sharing with us the strength and the power and the holiness and the fortitude of the Father. And so, we find that Jesus continues to be Bread from heaven. The wonder of His presence is even more powerful now than the presence the manna signified in the desert. The manna was an external demonstration of the power and care and provision of God for His people. Eating the bread of life is internal. Manna produced a very temporary satisfaction. After eating breakfast you would be hungry again for lunch. The bread of life satisfies eternally. Eat of His flesh and drink of His blood and you will have all that you will ever need.