

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

It will come as no surprise when I tell you I like to eat. I like foods that taste good, foods with a bite to them, a bit of jalapeno and habanero, really dark chocolate, black licorice, blue berries, oatmeal cookies, good fresh bread, walleye, oh, there is a host of things I like to eat. Like most of us I suppose, my preferences in food go way beyond the need for mere sustenance, far past just acknowledging that eating is a necessity to maintain life. I do not do much cooking or baking, but I am really good when it comes to eating, you might say I am committed to it!

Our gospel this morning talks about eating too. It starts with a restatement of verse 48, "I am the bread of life." The bread of life, or living bread, the bread that lives, bread that is full of the life it imparts, that gives life to those who partake of it. In a very literal fashion, Jesus is full of life and gives life.

When we think of bread, we think of eating and to eat the living bread, the bread of life, is to believe in Jesus. Earlier in this gospel we are told that it is God's purpose that we eat this bread, to literally believe in his Son. And here we realize that Jesus clarifies the nature of faith, because faith in Jesus, trust in Jesus, believing in Jesus is an intimate activity that like eating is wholehearted and involving. Like eating, faith is not an option, it is a necessity. I am an enthusiastic eater and faith like eating represents enthusiasm, it represents appetite. And from this faith, comes life. Not just doctrine, statements that we absorb intellectually, but life, life in its fullest sense. Jesus is in us even more so than the food we eat, we abide, remain, live in him, and he in us, abiding, remaining, living. To eat and to drink of Jesus is to be spiritually joined to him. Our very souls embrace him and his death and resurrection, in faith and trust, and he embraces us.

The life we get from this food that is Jesus, sent by God, will last forever, and here is the difference between the food that is Jesus, and food that provides physical nourishment for our bodies; our bodies will die in spite of the food we eat, but we will be raised again because of the food that is Jesus.

Now here is something that might help you as you are fed by this text. The word translated as eat in verse 53 is what we call an aorist, which simply means it is once and for all, and it is necessary for eternal life. And in the next verse, the word translated as eat, is a different word, a word that one of my favorite authors, Leon Morris, says often carries the notion of eating with enjoyment, which brings me full circle to the enjoyment I get when I eat to sustain this physical life.

The sustenance we get from Jesus really comes back to his mission, Jesus has been sent by the living Father, and here I want to stress the active quality of life that inheres in the Father. The life of Jesus is bound up with that of the Father, and Jesus lives because of the Father, to receive Christ is to have the life that comes only from Jesus. To eat of the bread that is Christ is to have life, the abundant

life that comes from Jesus. A life of loving God, of loving neighbor, loving one another, serving and caring for one another.

Fed by God is so simple in a life full of busyness, a life spent acquiring and pursuing even more. Have you ever noticed that it seems that the more we run after stuff, success, power, money, even joy, more it seems to flee from us? The life that we receive from Christ is not gained by running after it, it is not gained by acquiring more and more. It is not something we earn, deserve, can buy, we do not get it by our accomplishments in the world or for that matter, even in the church, it does not come because of our own innate righteousness, or some kind of intellectual mastery of the Bible. Being fed by God comes from listening to the Word of God, of believing or trusting in it, in other words faith, it is something that comes to us by the grace of God.

Those who ate manna in the wilderness inevitably died. Those who try to live by eating that which the world provides, will also die. But anyone who eats the bread that is Christ will live forever with the living Father's life reaching down through his Son.

AMEN