

IN NOMINE JESU

THE SAYINGS OF LIFE ETERNAL

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

When you heard the Gospel reading for today, what did words such as these bring into your mind, heart and soul?

The one eating My Flesh and drinking My Blood has life eternal, and I will resurrect him with the Last Day.

In Christian freedom, under the ancient confessions of the True Church, you are free to hear in Jesus' teaching about the Bread of Life either the Sacrament of the Altar or the spiritual partaking of the proclaimed Word of God. What you are not free to believe is that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that one commune in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. Nor are you to believe that a life-long rejection of Jesus' words regarding eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood is possible for true Christians who have heard Jesus' teaching. It is not the lack of reception of the Sacrament of the Altar, but the continued despising of Jesus' sayings, which condemns.

Fear not for yourself regarding the matters of importance in today's Gospel, for God has brought you here to feed you with His gifts, and grant you forgiveness, life and salvation. Your presence in this assembly of sinner-saints is outward proof that you are being saved. In your attendance at this Divine Service God has kept you faithful to the meaning of the Third Commandment:

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise His Word and preaching, but regard it holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

Since we know that God is the One who brought you here to hear His Word, to teach you from it, listen and learn anew from Jesus in His “Bread of Life” discourse:

I I AM the Bread, the Living One, the One coming down out of the heavens; if someone might eat from this Bread, he will live into the aeons, also the Bread which I give (is) My flesh - for the life of the world.¹

In St. John’s inspired record of the events of that day in a synagogue in Capernaum, the words that began today’s Gospel reading have already been spoken three times. They are, as many of you know, the Divine Name. This means that there is to be no doubt that the saying which follows *is* the Word of God. So, we regarded it holy, even as we have gladly heard from it.

In our text, in using the Divine Name, Jesus declares Himself to be God. There is to be no equivocation: Jesus is God. Then, so that the people who would be His true disciples would know how God was revealing Himself, Jesus uses words that are to become synonymous with “I AM.” They are, “Bread,” “Living One,” “the One coming down from heaven.”

Recall that Jesus taught the truths we have heard this morning after His miraculous multiplication of bread and fish in order to feed the 5,000 men plus women and children. He spoke these words as those multitudes, and the others who joined them on account of that miracle, followed Him wherever He went. They knew He could give them food without cost to them. They heard him promise to be the Messiah. Crassly

¹ John 6:51.

put: many were following Jesus because He had become for them, “the Bread God,” a free meal ticket!

That is why Jesus’ repeated statements that He is the Living Bread from heaven caused so much consternation among His hearers that day. The Jews among them could recall how God through Moses gave the Israelites bread – through the Manna – during the wilderness wandering centuries before. They could see Jesus as a prophet with powers such as Moses had. But they could not, on account of unbelief, see Him as The Prophet, Who was also Great High Priest and Final Sacrifice, and King of the Creation. That is why Jesus’ declaration that anyone who ate of His flesh would have life eternal caused so much grumbling, as our text declares:

The Jews fought then with one another, continually saying, “How does this Man have power to give to us His flesh to eat?”²

Those first hearers of Jesus’ sayings who had been taught the tenants of the Jewish faith knew that it contained strict prohibitions against eating flesh with the blood in it. They believe that cannibalism was wrong. The very suggestion that this Man would give His flesh as bread was repulsive. Jesus desired to teach them, that which we hear and believe because the Spirit of the Living God dwells in us.

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to all of you, if you may not eat the flesh of the Son of the Man and you may (not) drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. The one eating My Flesh and drinking My blood has life eternal, and I will resurrect him with the Last Day. For My Flesh truly remains food, and My Blood truly remains drink. The one eating My Flesh and drinking My Blood remains in Me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me, and I live through the Father, also the one eating Me has life through Me.

² John 6:52.

This remains the Bread, the One out of (the) heavens coming down, not just as the fathers ate and died; the one eating this Bread will live into the aeons.”³

That teaching by Jesus began with the words we translate, “Truly, truly I say to all of you.” It is the fourth time that phrase was used before the people who had followed Jesus that day. In St. John’s Gospel, when that phrase comes from Jesus, it is a “sit up and pay attention” marker. That means that which follows is the Word of God from the Word of God. It is useful for teaching, correcting and rebuking that the one who would be the child of God would be complete, fully equipped for every good work.⁴ This day’s text is important. It speaks to the faith that one needs to receive Christ Jesus rightly. That point is driven home when we consider that it was first spoken to those who were grumbling about Jesus’ sayings!

In particular, this central portion of the Gospel for this week speaks of receiving Jesus by faith. That is it has a spiritual component that is only received by those who truly confess and believe that Jesus is Christ, God, His Son, and Savior. To those who want Jesus on any other terms – as Bread God – or the “god who gives me what I want when I want it,” there is no gift of eternal life in Christ. They set up for themselves another Jesus, not of the Scriptures, and theirs is not the true Jesus.

Jesus promises resurrection from the dead for those who spiritually partake of His Flesh and Blood. He speaks of a spiritual communion between Him and you. This most assuredly is seen as He comes to you in, with, and under Bread and Wine. Yet

³ *John* 6:53-58.

⁴ cf. *II Timothy* 3:16.

it is also true that He comes to you bringing you food for immortality with His Word.

Our confessions teach this very clearly, when they say:

There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48-58. This occurs, in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and contemplation of the Gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper.... The other eating of the body of Christ is oral or sacramental, when all who eat and drink the blessed bread and wine in the Lord's Supper receive and partake of the true, essential body and blood of Christ orally.⁵

What that means is that Jesus' sayings allow for the faithful to participate in a twofold eating and drinking of His flesh and blood. It is what you by faith have been doing this morning, and will continue to do to the end of this Divine Service. In a supernatural, humanly incomprehensible manner, Jesus comes to His people and gives them the Bread of Life. He has chosen simple means to deliver that food, not by a miraculous rain of seed-like Manna, but with His proclaimed Word and His chosen means of Grace – the Sacrament of the Altar. These are comprehended only in the Faith of Christ Jesus. Those who have not His faith respond to the revelation of these mysteries as did many of those who first followed Him. Our text continues:

Many from His disciples then hearing said, "Hard remains this word; who (has) power to hear it?"⁶

The sense of the complaints this time is that what Jesus has just declared strikes like stone. There is more in their complaint than just the idea that Jesus' saying difficult to understand. It is as if they perceive that His sayings are such that their

⁵Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

⁶John 6:60.

thoughts about them bounce off, or are wounded, as they strike the hard Word of God. They were right in understanding that people, in and of themselves, do not have the power needed to truly hear, mark and inwardly digest Jesus' revealed mysteries. Only those who are in Christ, that is we who have been baptized into His death, have risen to new life in Him, and remain in His Word have God's power to rightly hear Him.

Even so, Jesus has compassion on those who are not yet one with Him. He, using His divine nature, understands that His words strike hard. What He did, and still does, when that happens, is displayed in the next section of the Gospel reading for today.

But Jesus, beholding in Himself that His disciples were murmuring about this, said to them, "By this all of you are scandalized? What then if you may see the Son of Man ascending where He was before? For the spirit remains life-giving, the flesh profits not; the sayings which I spoke to all of you remain spirit and the life. But there remain some from you who do not continually believe." (For Jesus knew from (the) beginning who was believing and who remained the one handing Him over).⁷

Did you hear Jesus exercise His divine ability to know the hearts of those who want to follow Him? He gets to the heart of their objections – that His Word is hard on the hard-hearted. He then tells them what some of them will see. That is, that Jesus, as the Son of Man, the Messiah of God's people, the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King, having humbled Himself in our flesh, took that flesh and placed it at the highest position of power, majesty, might, honor and glory in all of creation.

In that day, in which you and I are now living, we dwell with Christ in the heavenly places as we remain attached to Him through the means He provided. In them

⁷ John 6:61-64.

we eat of His Flesh and drink His Blood. In them we have blessed life eternal. Why then do some who hear the blessed words of our Lord not believe? Jesus answers,

“On account of this I spoke to all of you: that no one has power to come to Me except it has been given him from the Father.”⁸

That declaration is why I often remind the members of our congregations in Marana and Catalina that you are here because God brought you here. Your attendance at the mysteries of God in this place today is because the Father has drawn you here. The hard teachings of Jesus are not for everyone, as our text makes abundantly clear as it declares:

From this many [from] His disciples went back and no longer continued to walk about with Him.⁹

When it became clear that Jesus was not “the Bread god,” that He was not going to meet all their “felt-needs,” many of those who had at first-hand witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching fell back into their old lives. They didn’t desire the God who would take on their weaknesses, their sins, and die to save them.

It is much the same today, as people who would follow Jesus want to come to Him on their own terms, with their own self-conceived needs, desires and wants. Entire methodologies have been developed by people in erring congregations. Those churches attempt to meet consumer-demands for “church,” and in doing so, often fail to provide the Jesus of the Scriptures. They give their hearers with great stories, social events, personal services, and they fall short in giving them Christ-crucified for the forgiveness

⁸ John 6:65.

of all their sins. (That can be difficult to do in “consumer-driven” congregations, because it is not nice. It is very painful to remind people that they are sinners in need of forgiveness). But that is just what Jesus does, as our text declares:

He said then Jesus to the Twelve, “Not also all of you will to go?”¹⁰

The word of the Lord again calls the conscience to account. The Law stands.

But the Gospel predominates in the believer, even as

Simon Peter answered Him, “O Lord, to whom will we go? You have (the) sayings of eternal life, and we have believed; and we know that You remain (the) Holy One of God.”¹¹

That is the confession of the Faith. May St. Peter’s words be true for you all the days of this mortal life. You have the sayings of life eternal to reinforce the Faith given by God to you.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Pentecost 11B (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Proverbs 9:1-10; Ephesians 5:6-21; John 6:51-69

August 16, 2009

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

⁹ John 6:66.

¹⁰ John 6:67.

¹¹ John 6:68-69.

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT:

*I I AM the Loaf the Living One the One out of the heavens coming down; if someone might eat from this the Loaf he will live into the aeons, also the Loaf and being I I give the flesh of Me remains for the one of the world life.*¹²

*They fought then with one another the Jews, continually saying, "How he has power this to us to give the flesh [of Him] to eat?"*¹³

*He said to them Jesus, "Truly, truly I say to all of you, if not you may eat the flesh of the Son of the Man and you may drink of Him the blood, no you have life in yourselves. The one eating of Me the Flesh and drinking of Me the blood has life eternal, and I will resurrect him with the Last Day. The for Flesh of Me truly remains 'food of the gods,' and the Blood of Me truly remains drink. The one eating of Me the Flesh and drinking of Me the Blood in Me remains and I in him. Just as He sent Me the living Father also I live through the Father, and the one eating Me there life through Me. This remains the Loaf the One out of heavens coming down, not just as eating the fathers and they died; the one eating this the Loaf he will live into the aeons."*¹⁴

*These things He said in synagogue teaching in Capernaum.*¹⁵

*Many people then hearing out of the disciples of Him said, "Hard remains the word this; who power of Him to hear."*¹⁶

*Beholding but Jesus in Himself that murmuring about this the disciples of Him said to them, "By this all of you are scandalized? If then you all may see the Son of the Man ascending where He was the before? For the spirit remains the life-giving, the flesh not profits; the sayings which ones I spoke to all of you spirit remains the life remain. But remain from you all some the ones not continually believing."*¹⁷

*He knew for from beginning Jesus someones believing ads someone remains the one handing over Him.*¹⁸

*And He said, "On account of this I spoke to you all that no one has power to come to Me except by the one having been given over him from the Father."*¹⁹

¹² John 6:51.

¹³ John 6:52.

¹⁴ John 6:53-58.

¹⁵ John 6:59.

¹⁶ John 6:60.

¹⁷ John 6:61-63.

¹⁸ John 6:64.

¹⁹ John 6:65.

Out of this many [from] the disciples of Him went into the behinds and no longer with Him continued to walk about.²⁰

He said then Jesus to the Twelve, "Not also you all will to go?"²¹

He answered to Him Simon Peter, "O Lord, toward someone we depart? Sayings of life eternal You have, and we having believed and we know that You remain Holy One of God."²²

CONFESSIONS:

Likewise, John 6:48–58 says that Christ's flesh is a life-giving food, and according to the Council of Ephesus decreed that the flesh of Christ has the power to give life. (FC 2, VIII, 59)²³

There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48-58. This occurs, in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and contemplation of the Gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper. It is intrinsically useful, salutary, and necessary to salvation for all Christians at all times. Without this spiritual participation, even the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only salutary but actually pernicious and damning.⁶² This spiritual eating, however, is precisely faith — namely, that we hear, accept with faith, and appropriate to ourselves the Word of God, in which Christ, true God and man, together with all the benefits that he has acquired for us by giving his body for us into death and by shedding his blood for us (that is to say, the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and everlasting life), is presented — and that we rest indomitably, with certain trust and confidence, on this comforting assurance that we have a gracious God and eternal salvation for the sake of Jesus Christ, and hold to it in all difficulty and temptation.

⁶³ The other eating of the body of Christ is oral or sacramental, when all who eat and drink the blessed bread and wine in the Lord's Supper receive and partake of the true, essential body and blood of Christ orally. Believers receive it as a certain pledge and assurance that their sins are truly forgiven, that Christ dwells and is efficacious in them; unbelievers receive it orally, too, but to their judgment and damnation.⁶⁴ This is what Christ's words of institution say, when at table and during supper he handed his disciples natural bread and natural wine, which he called his true body and blood, and said therewith, "Eat and drink." Under the circumstances this command can only be understood as referring precisely to oral eating and drinking — not, however, in a coarse, carnal, Capernaite³ manner, but in a supernatural, incomprehensible manner.⁶⁵ But Christ adds another command, and in addition to the oral eating he ordains the spiritual eating, when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." In these words he required faith.

⁶⁶ Hence, in harmony with these words of Christ's institution and St. Paul's exposition of them, all the ancient Christian teachers and the entire holy Christian church teach unanimously that the body of

²⁰ John 6:66.

²¹ John 6:67.

²² John 6:68-69.

²³Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

³ At Capernaum (John 6:52-65) the Jews interpreted Christ's words as a purely natural and physical eating of his body. In sixteenth century controversial language "Capernaite" was a "growl-word" that implied belief in transubstantiation.

(tr-997) Christ is received not only spiritually through faith, which occurs outside of the sacrament too, but also orally, and this by unworthy, unbelieving, false, and wicked Christians as well as by the godly and pious.⁴ Since these testimonies are too long to list here, in the interest of desirable brevity we direct the Christian reader to our more extensive writings.²⁴

⁴ At this point the Torgau Book introduced quotations from Theodoret, *Interpretatio epistolae 1. ad Corinthios*, ad 11, 27; John Chrysostom, *Sermo 3 in Ephesos 1; Homilia 59 in Matthaem; In epistola I. ad Corinthios homilia XXVII*, 5; *Homilia 11 ad populum; Homilia 21*; Cyprian, *De lapsis XVI, XXII*; Leo, *Sermo 91 (6) de ieiunio*; Gregory the Great, *Dialogi, IV, 58; Homilia in evangelia XXII, 7*; Ambrose (unidentified); Augustine, *Epistola 54 (118)*, 4, 8.

²⁴Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia