

2015\_08\_23 Pentecost 13  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

### **Taste His Word and Say that He is Good**

*4 part sermon series: "Taste and See that the LORD is Good"*

John 6:51–69

INI

Grace and peace to you from the God our Father who has granted us life through His Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### ***John 6:51–69***

*<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

*<sup>52</sup> The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"*

*<sup>53</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup> He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."*

*<sup>59</sup> These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.*

*<sup>60</sup> Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"*

*<sup>61</sup> When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. <sup>65</sup> And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."*

*<sup>66</sup> From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*

*<sup>67</sup> Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*

*<sup>68</sup> But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

This Word of the Lord is spoken for you.

Let us pray, O Lord, feed us with your word to satisfy our every need. Amen.

In Jesus name, dear fellow disciples and followers of Christ Jesus our Lord,

If this were scripted by a political speech writer, no one would have imagined it turning out the way it did. We have entered into the last portion of our series from Jesus' bread of life discourse, and it just doesn't quite end the way we might expect. Normally, when a prominent political figure has a chance to connect with a large audience like this, he will want to leave them feeling good about themselves; he wants to leave to rousing applause and shouts of support. But not with Jesus.

They were happy with him when he just provided them with bread. But the closer and closer they get to the synagogue the more and more they become unsure about Jesus. In our sermon series, we have followed the crowds from the wilderness to the synagogue. We have seen Jesus take five loaves of bread and provide enough food to satisfy thousands of people. And we have seen how it was just not enough. They wanted more. So we have followed the crowds from the wilderness to the synagogue, as they come from all directions to find him and follow him. However, the way it ended was not what they imagined.

The closer and closer to the synagogue they get, the more and more the resistance builds. And what I mean is, the closer and closer they get to Jesus' central purpose, the meaning of his ministry, the harder and harder it is to follow him. The more and more they taste what he has to offer, the more and more they discover its not what they are hungry for. For here at the conclusion of his discourse, Jesus comes to the central point of all he has come to do: "No one can come to the Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." And from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with him no more. It just didn't turn out the way the crowds imagined it.

And so he asks those who are left ... and so he asks us, "Do you also want to go away?" Today we conclude our series on the Bread of Life by tasting his word and wondering: can we not only see, but can we also truly say that he is good?

We've come to the synagogue with Jesus; we've been confronted by the resistance that is building within us; we've reached the central meaning of all that Jesus has come to do and he asks us, "Do you want to go away also?"

Maybe a debilitating disease has left a bad taste in your mouth. Its cancer and it has infected your bone cells. The leukemia blasts and radiation treatment has zapped you of life itself. You have no desire to eat; not even to drink. Everything comes in a small can that you drink and it all tastes the same; bland; bitter even. Everything has become bitter to your tastebuds as cancer has debilitated you to the point of death. And there next to you is a man who has his own share of health troubles. He tells you about the laundry list of chronic troubles he's had, how he's been on dialysis for years now, how nothing has gone well for him. When he finds out you are a Christian he says, "See how good God is? He's left you alone in a hospital suffering from a disease which has no cure. What good does it do to be a Christian if this is what happens? That's why I gave up God a long time ago." When he's done, you lay there wondering what to say; wondering if God really is so good. And you are confronted with a question, "Do you want to go away also?"

Or maybe your relationship with your husband has left a bad taste in your mouth. He really doesn't seem to care. You don't talk anymore; the most you do together is spend an evening together once and a while – you over here on your tablet; him over there on his laptop, each watching your own thing, each in your own little world. As you get to talking to a co-worker, you find out she's had her own set of troubles at home. But she explains how she's met someone else. A guy who will listen. A guy who cares. A guy who can make her happy. And you are confronted with a question, "Do you want to go away also?"

Or maybe guilt has left a bad taste in your mouth and you can't seem to get rid of. You can't tell your parents. You certainly can't tell your pastor. This has been going on for far too long and you know you'll never be able to meet their standards. What would they say? What would you say? So you talk to your non-Christian friends about it. And they wonder what the big deal is. Everyone does it. They tell you to be yourself. Follow your impulses. They tell you that if God didn't want you to be like this, he wouldn't have made you this way. And you find the closer you come to the central meaning of Christ, the more resistance builds, and you are confronted with a question, "Do you want to go away also?"

And from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more. What they were looking for was more bread; what they found was Jesus; and what they decided was that they'd be able to find something more satisfying elsewhere.

These are hard sayings and we want to go somewhere else. Somewhere easier. Somewhere more comfortable. All this talk of eating his flesh and drinking his blood – it makes no sense. It makes us uncomfortable. The closer we get to discovering who

Jesus really is and what has come to do, the more and more we resist it. It is an offense to us. And what that means is it is a stumbling block. This meaning of offense is like a roadblock. Something that you want nothing to do with; something telling you the road is out, you can go no further, the path ahead will lead only to death. And that is just what Jesus is saying. “No one can come to the Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” Coming to Jesus means death. It means death to our sinful flesh; and it means death to Jesus. It means that together with Jesus, we go to die. Against all odds, against all reason, we go with him down that road to the cross. And there we see him die. There his flesh and blood is crucified; there he suffers death. And we are offended because this seems wrong; this does not taste good; this is anything but the path to life. This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?

Jesus knows this saying is not going to end in rousing applause. But not just because he is talking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood; more so because of what he says in v.65. “No one can come Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” What that means is that it will not be up to us, or our efforts, or our reasoning, to find God. It will be up to God to find us. And when he finds us, he finds us lost, confused, distracted by so many voices telling us this and that about what is good – and when we least expect it, there it is – a taste of something good.

*53 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”*

To understand what Jesus is saying here, we need to begin in the wilderness. It began with Jesus providing bread from heaven in the wilderness. From five loaves of bread he was able to feed over 5000 people. Yet they were not satisfied. They wanted more. So they follow him as he moves on to Capernaum. And when they come to him, asking for more, what does he give them? “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life.” Then they look for a sign, some sort of proof that he can satisfy their needs. And his only sign? Himself. “I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

The closer and closer they get to him, the more and more he reveals that this is not about bread. It is not about satisfying what we want, but what we really need – salvation. “Come to Me,” He says. “Whoever eats of me will live.” What Jesus is saying is that he is the source of all life; and the efforts of our flesh are useless. All our earthly efforts to find something that will make us happy, or which will make us content, or which will make us right with God – it will never be enough. More will always be needed. Only in Jesus do we find the food which satisfies eternally. Eating his flesh and drinking his blood is to receive him fully, in every way, by faith. Whoever believes in me will never thirst. That is, despite all feelings, all reasoning which tells you to go another way, you go down that roadblocked path, and simply believe that he will lead you to something good.

You lay in the hospital bed, tasting the bitterness of cancer, listening to the guy next to you tear God apart, chew him up and spit him out – and you face that roadblocked path wondering, “To whom shall I go?”

You are facing marriage troubles, tasting the blandness of a marriage that doesn’t seem to have any life left in it, listening to this guy at work go on about how he’s going to find something better, something happier – and you face that roadblocked path wondering, “To whom shall I go?”

You are facing guilt, tasting the ugliness of your sins, listening to your friends carefree attitude about sin – and you face that roadblocked path, that offense to your flesh, seeing all the easier ways around you and you wonder, “To whom shall I go?”

And Jesus says, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”* He takes you by the hand, and says, “Take my word for it. No matter how many detours you try to get around; no matter how much easier, or more comfortable this way or that way might seem, it will never get you across. They will only lead to manna, bread, and ultimately eternal death. But the words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are life.” And in words of His Holy Spirit and His life, he carries you down that road with him; down that road to the cross, to death, and beyond. You go down that road, right into the midst of cancer; you go down that road, right into the midst of marriage troubles; you go down that road, right into the depth of your own sins and guilt and you watch as the Son of God is nailed to your sins. You see his own flesh and blood lifted up for your guilt. And you know in this human form is God’s own Son, who is winning the victory over all suffering, all sin, all death. And you taste it. The Spirit lifts you up and takes you beyond the cross so that you can taste God’s goodness. In this word, there is life. There is resurrection. Jesus lives. The word that he speaks to us is spirit and it is life and it has brought us

something eternally good, beyond the cross. In his flesh and his blood, by faith, we can taste and see that that the Lord is good. For in Jesus, God has taken away all your sins. He has put to death your sinful flesh and made you into something new. He has lifted you up to the other side, where you are at peace with him, where God has prepared a new creation, satisfaction for your every need. Not only can you taste it, not only can you see it, but you can say it.

As you lay on your hospital bed, you fold your hands to pray and you say it: "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life."

As you sit down to dinner with your husband, you begin talking about your marriage struggles and you say it, "To whom shall we go, Jesus has the words of eternal life."

As you confront the guilt that has been plaguing you, you come to here, to the synagogue, to church, to the central meaning of all Jesus has come to do, because you know there is no one else to whom you can go, Jesus has the words of eternal life.

Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Amen.

