

John 6:51-58

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

John 6:51-58, 2015

As I have approached this forth week in the gospel of John in which Jesus talks about himself as bread and wine I find myself growing weary of the theme and a little frustrated with again now having to deal with this same announcement.

First Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the 5,000 with a little bit of bread and a couple of fish that a boy had brought,

and then John spends the rest of the chapter interpreting the meaning of this event through Jesus' words.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty..."

I am the living bread who came down from heaven...
whoever eats this bread will live forever..."

and as he goes along dives deeper into this idea saying

"the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

How many times can we plod through the same speech, the same theme and find something new to say about it,

or learn something new?

How many times must we go through this before we figure out what meaning this has for everyday life, before you get counsel and comfort and peace in dealing with this life from Jesus' words?

That is what you need isn't it, that is what you came here looking for isn't it?

Jesus words are so abstract about eating His body and drinking His blood but you need something concrete, meaningful for today.

How can this man give us His flesh to eat? That was the question the people in Capernaum finally came to, and can be where we find ourselves in our fourth week of hearing about this.

Don't be ridiculous Jesus with your empty, abstract metaphors that mean nothing for my life today.

And Jesus responds,

It is the truth, both for the crowd who gathers around Him in Capernaum and all of you gathered here in the church today.

He said,

"I am telling you the truth; if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I

will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.”

Suddenly if you listen to those words you realize, Jesus is not being abstract or metaphorical, not as we understand the bread and wine we eat and drink in Holy Communion. He is saying exactly what He means.

“The bread he will give for the life of the world is His flesh.”

Maybe at this point you, I, we all stop and take this as seriously as He does.

What is He saying?

The people in Capernaum are taken aback and some followers will leave Him. This doesn't meet any of their sensibilities, violates the law and the teachings of the prophets and certainly does not square with their reason.

For us even the thought of eating human flesh and drinking human blood seems at best a gross act of cannibalism rather than Christianity.

Last night Laura reminded me of one Easter Sunday when our children were little and we lived in DeLand we brought Sean and Stephanie to park in Daytona Beach near the marina and we met a little boy there. The kids still had their Easter clothes on while they all played together. The little

boy realizing, apparently, that we had been to church asked if we had. We said yes and he asked what church we went to. And we told him the Lutheran Church. And he said “Of yeah, you people are the ones who are cannibals.

When did you last really pay close attention to the words of Jesus we remember at each celebration of the Eucharist?

This is my body, this is my blood.

And Jesus means it and perhaps we now may come to recognize what is at stake for Him when He makes this claim.

Maybe at this point you may realize just how much you are worth to Jesus.

In these verses Jesus offers even His own flesh and blood,

The flesh that was torn in the scourging and stretched on a cross for your sake, and mine

The blood that flowed from his mutilated body, His hands, feet and side,
for your sake and mine.

Here Jesus makes it painfully clear what He has been saying to us for four weeks now, that we have been trying to understand.

In His imagery He has confronted us with the claim and promise that God has become incarnate, taken on flesh, become just like us,

so that we may one day be like God.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist the Word, Jesus, God, has been given physical, visible form once again, and you meet the God who, after giving everything for you, will be satisfied with nothing less than your whole self.

In Jesus the whole of God comes to love, redeem and sustain the whole of who you are; the good, bad and ugly.

Amen