**8/18/24**

**Music, Food and Drink, Flesh and Blood**

**John 6:51-58 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Many of you out there know that I will quickly admit that music is not one of my gifts. I do not know how to read it, I definitely do not know how to play it, nor do I know how or when to sing appropriately and carry the correct tune. I am okay with that now, but it surely took some time to get to that point in my life. If you could ever imagine all of your hopes and dreams being dashed away at a very young age by a Catholic grade school music teacher, then you have me. My mother and I were informed by this music teacher that I should never consider playing an instrument or singing as a career choice. Apparently, I was so bad in my music classes as a child that this particular music teacher felt the need to make things even worse by putting me down during a parent teacher conference. Now, I am sure there were many alternative and better ways to handle this, but no, not this teacher! This Catholic grade school music teacher was so direct and to the point that she must have felt that she was auditioning to be a judge on America’s Got Talent well before the show even existed. She might as well have considered herself to be the Simon Cowell character in this particular instance. As these very comments and attitude from this music teacher really did phase me just like Simon has phased contestants during auditions and shows. I am even embarrassed at times to admit that one person could phase me so much, and to be honest with you, I still admit that her words still bother me a little bit to this day, or I would not even be up here talking about it.

My skill or interest in learning music actually got to the very point of little or no interest that it became quite noticeable. As I carried the very words and mentality from my childhood with me so long that it took my Lutheran Pastor in Pittsburgh to snap me out of it well past my college years. Pastor Bill stopped at my pew while processing out of church one Sunday, and he looked me directly in the eye, and asked me why I was not singing the Sending Hymn. Now, I of course was a little shocked by this, but my response was simply to shake my head and say that I couldn’t. So, like any loving parent or pastor he pulled me aside following service and talked with me about this in private a bit further. I of course shared my story, just like I did with all of you here. Pastor Bill shook his head and reminded me that in church we sung no matter how good or bad we perceived we were because we were actually singing praises unto the Lord. He reassured me that church was a safe space, and that I should be blessed to have a voice. Well, from that time and point I truly began to sing again, and you all are blessed with my good and bad moments each Worship Service as a result. So, you can either thank Pastor Bill or be mad at him, but regardless, we are all reminded of that very point he made to me. We are present in this safe place to sing praises as we indeed need to honor and show our love to the Lord.

Now, with me spilling out a little bit of my personal feelings and history, and with me being a little vulnerable out of the way, let’s take a look at things here from this musical direction I have started us out on today. Just as a reminder here, this is where you get to participate, and you even get to show me that you are not taking this time to catch a quick nap or balance your checkbooks out there in the pews or at home. This is where you get to raise your hands, shake your heads, or say ugh huh. So, don’t make me unmute this conference call now to check on you at home as well! Okay, I’m just kidding with you all…. or am I? But seriously, thank you all for being here in this community so we can explore the Word and our faith more, and so that we can eat and drink at this very table together during Holy Communion so we can indeed taste and see how great it is. This is the very safe space that allows us to sing, and in this space, we are encouraged to continually grow in faith and love together.

Now, are you ready for church participation time folks? So, how many of you out other there have listened to a song over and over again to the point that you really liked it? How many of you even thought that you picked up on the lyrics very well and sang that song aloud over and over again? Then, how many of you have actually sang that very song aloud when you were with friends or family at a party or on a car ride only to be laughed at? How many of you were so dead set on the lyrics you were singing that you could not believe in any shape, way, or form that what you were singing was actually wrong? How many of you actually had to look it up for yourself, or even have a friend or family member actually show you the correct lyrics? Were you actually embarrassed or frustrated by this? Were you sickened or appalled by what the lyrics actually said? Were you even so confused or befuddled that you had thought the lyrics were what they actually were not? Did you even choose to no longer enjoy the song the way you once did? Did you possibly lose any interest in that very song or even that particular singer or performer? Then, for the alternative twist, did you actually like the song more now that you knew the correct lyrics? Were you happy to be corrected, and found even more comfort and joy in the song? There of course are indeed several possibilities to consider, and probably more than I have even questioned or listed here.

What a whirlwind of surprise we are often in once we slow down just a bit and allow for things to be taken into a different mindset and perspective. That is exactly how I am going to encourage you to take this Gospel Reading in again today. I mean you thought last week when I brought up the topic of cannibalism that I was probably out of my mind, and yet again we get to experience it again here this Sunday during our fourth consecutive discussion about bread. We even get the very same verse to open our Gospel Reading today that we actually closed our Gospel Reading out with last week. Then, to top it all off we even get more content, and more awkward stuff listed and talked about. Well, that is very true unless you chose to heed the very advice that I just offered a few short seconds ago. That is to slow down just a bit and allow for things to be taken into a different mindset and perspective. This is precisely when we need to cast our prior notions and ourselves aside for a bit, and trust fully in God and what he is trying to say and do here instead. We do indeed need to remind ourselves that we need to open our very mindset and perspective to the times in which the story occurred, but to God and the message so that we can experience something so much greater than we can even initially think or imagine. So, let’s take a little journey here today and try to really figure out what the heck this awkward Gospel Reading is really trying to get at, and not just be so perturbed or confused by it.

So, as you sit there and try to wrap your mind around everything, I have shared with you so far, you are probably thinking to yourself that all I have pretty much talked about to this point is music. You are probably thinking that I have not really spoken about food or drink, or for that fact, flesh and blood. Well, for those of you that are musically inclined or gifted then you actually know that I have spoken about all those things, just in a slightly different manner. Music has and continues to unlock so many things for so many people. Quite frankly music honestly is a type of food and drink that becomes so necessary to life for many people. It becomes so necessary to some people that they can even feel hungry, thirsty, depressed, tired, desiring, lonely, empty, or even lost without it. Just as we can often feel when we are not nourished by a meal of food and drink. And, exactly how we can and actually do end up feeling when we are not regularly fed and nourished by the very flesh and blood of the gospel message from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, you may think that it is kind of awkward how all of those things actually do manage to link up. They of course also have their subtle differences too, but that is the very interesting and awesome part of our faith. It is not just a one and done or clear-cut scenario. It is not a one song and were done performance or listening to ordeal. For that fact it also is not a one meal and beverage kind of thing and we are full forever. It is a lifelong hunger and thirst, it is a desire to sing or listen, it is a pursuit of love and understanding, it is a constant seeking of peace and comfort, it is an endless desire for joy and happiness, and that is just to name a few feelings and things there for sure.

We come to the very realization that we often need to seek out our Triune God in more of a calculated and consistent manner than we all realize at times. In doing so it manages to be so calculated and consistent that it creates a constant hunger and thirst. Through this very process we even come to the very realization that “Just physically hearing God’s Word or just bodily eating and drinking the elements of the Lord’s Supper is not enough; these must be accompanied by faith, which gathers and holds fast the benefits of such hearing, eating, and drinking. It is faith that ’digests’ this food.” (8) Through this very digestion and absorption, we come to realize even further that our Triune God is always calling, seeking, loving, and believing in us every moment of every day. God wants us to love ourselves, our neighbor, and to love him exactly the way he loves us. Whether it is through music and the art of lyrics, whether it is through food and drink, or whether it is spiritually through Word and practice. All of those things take on different physical and mental preparation, but I assure you they are all the same in one manner or another over time as well, and they are very much vital to life.

Now, that we have kind of managed to get everything figured out a little bit more today, and I have not just trailed off into some kind of awkward rabbit hole, we can really pinpoint things here. “Eating and drinking are outstanding metaphors for how we receive what Jesus offers his followers. To experience Jesus’ saving power, believers must feed on him: “must absorb his teaching, his character, his mind, and ways; must appropriate the virtue in him till his mind becomes our mind and his ways our ways; till we think somewhat as he would do if he were in our place, and can be and do what without him we could not be or do; and this because his power has passed into us and become our power.” (Buttrick, The Interpreter’s Bible, 573–574)” (4) This is exactly where we are reminded God encourages us to taste and see all that is good as a result of him living out the very scriptures through his death and resurrection as well.

Yes, back then the Jews and everyone else Jesus encountered needed to ensure they filled their physical tanks and desires for food and drink, just as we do now. However, the Jews and everyone else back then, including us right now, must also ensure that our spiritual desires to eat and drink God’s Word are filled just as regularly if not more often than sitting down or grabbing a quick meal or drink. Only seeing the manna and all the other feedings as miracles and being unable to link the basic act and need to eat and drink to the desire to know God more fully and completely was and is an extremely dangerous road to be on. So, let us continually change our thought process and approach and fill our hearts and minds with God and the Word. Let us desire it as much as music, as much as food and drink, and let us be thankful for the flesh and blood that made everything possible for you and for I, and for all those that believed and lived out the life of the faith before us as well. For we are brought to the very understanding that without Christ’s death and resurrection we are nothing and have nothing. However, through that we are claimed by our Triune God, and have everything and anything we can ever need or imagine!

So, I am going to be vulnerable one more time here as I leave you with these very lyrics from the Casting Crowns song, “What if His People Prayed.” I messed these lyrics up royally, and they were some of several lyrics I have sung aloud on a car ride at a time or another and have been laughed at and corrected. However, that is okay, and I am forever thankful that they were actually corrected by my wife. For they mean so much more now, and the correct lyrics really link the song together more. They are also in no shape, way, or form a dig; but a call for what we all should do, and do more frequently. So, here goes nothing…

“What if the life that we pursue

Came from a hunger for the truth?

What if the family turned to Jesus

Stopped asking Oprah what to do?” (9)

Turn to Jesus and the cross, pray, focus, and devour the Word.

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 August 18th, 2024

 13th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) Bible.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus is clearly food and gives himself, flesh and blood, for the world’s life

 August 18, 2024

 Commentary on John 6:51-58

 Peter Claver Ajer

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus is manna, food that sustained Israel both physically and spiritually in the

 wilderness.

 August 19, 2018

 Commentary on John 6:51-58

 Susan Hylen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

 The temptation on this Sunday, when the gospel reading is so obviously, if not

 originally and explicitly about the Eucharist, is to endeavor to explain Holy

 Communion.

 August 16, 2015

 Commentary on John 6:51-58

 Craig A. Satterlee

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

 Once again we are faced with a Gospel text that deals with bread and eating.

 August 16, 2009

 Commentary on John 6:51-58

 Brian Peterson

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Genuine Food And Drink

 Contributed by Eric Stefanski on Aug 23, 2003

 Scripture: John 6:51-58, Romans 10:10-17

 Denomination: Lutheran

(9) Casting Crowns

 “What if His People Prayed”

 Song and Lyrics

 Source:https://www.bing.com/search?q=hunger+for+you+Casting+Crowns+lyrics&

 qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=1&ghc=1&lq=0&pq=hunger+for+you+casting+crowns+lyric

 &sc=235&sk=&cvid=FCFB9414D6A04CC79E310A9A157A5EC6&ghsh=0&ghacc=

 0&ghpl=

**John 6:51-58 (NRSV)**

In John’s gospel, the feeding of the five thousand leads to extended teaching in which Jesus identifies himself as the true “bread of life.” Finally, in these verses, he makes a connection that would not be understood until after his death, in light of the church’s celebration of holy communion.

[Jesus said,] 51“I 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.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

We need to open our very mindset and perspective to God so that we can experience something so much greater than we can even think or imagine.

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

The Jews could only see the manna and all the other feedings as miracles and were unable to link the basic act and need to eat and drink to the desire to know God more fully and completely.

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

We can only see the manna and all the other feedings as miracles and are unable to link the basic act and need to eat and drink to the desire to know God more fully and completely.

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

God encourages the people to taste and see all that is good as a result of him living out the scriptures through his impending death and resurrection.

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

God encourages us to taste and see all that is good as a result of him living out the scriptures through his death and resurrection.

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** John 6:51-58 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Taste and See

**Doctrine (48-50):** Faith and Salvation

**Need (50-52):** To eat and drink physically and spiritually

**Image (52-56):** Flesh & Blood

**Mission (56-57):** Bringing us all to the very understanding that without Christ’s death and resurrection we are nothing and have nothing.