

Proper 14 Year B

8/8/2021

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Psalm 130; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

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This is our third week in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John...

And Jesus declares himself as the **Bread of Life**.

A declaration where Jesus is saying that he is from heaven...

That he is God.

The Jews who were there complained...

How can this be? Is this not the son of Joseph?

And Jesus told them to stop complaining.

He goes on saying:

...whoever believes has eternal life...

And then repeats that He is the bread of life.

The bread of life is the key to last week's reading...

This week's reading...

And next week's gospel reading.

Jesus said: I am the Bread of Life.

However, I want to focus on the last two verses of our Gospel reading.

Where Jesus said:

This is the bread that comes down from heaven,

so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

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

Jesus clearly indicates that he, himself is the bread that comes down from heaven in order to provide eternal life for those that believe.

And of course, as Christians we cannot but hear the hints and images of our Eucharistic meal... our Communion feast...
the body and blood of our Lord Jesus.

Jesus gave his life... the bread of life for the life of the world.

Jesus said in the Gospel of Mark:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,

but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

Jesus primary mission in life was to die...

A perfect sacrifice.

Jesus gave his life so that we would benefit.

But not just on this side of death...

Also, for our life after death...

Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

For it is this bread of heaven that we eat at Eucharist...

Jesus not only declares that he is the bread of heaven...

But also chose, at the last supper, bread,
to be the symbol and the medium of which to receive his sacramental
grace.

In Communion...

In Eucharist...

We receive by faith forgiveness of sins.

We receive strength in our union with Christ and with one another.

And we receive a foretaste and nourishment toward eternal life.

For Eucharist *is* the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving that we offer
each Sunday on the Lord's Day...

A way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present...

Uniting us to himself.

This can be heard in our prayers...

Especially in the *Prayer of Humble Access* that we say together in our Rite 1 liturgy... our 8:00 liturgy.

We pray these words:

We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table.

But thou are the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy.

Here we always appeal to the mercies of God and not our own abilities, talents, or good works... its all on the mercy of God...

Because all have sinned... falling short of God's glory...

We are all in need of a Savior... of the mercy of God.

And we finish the prayer... this Prayer of Humble Access...

with these words:

Grant us therefore gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. (BCP, 337).

For it is in the Eucharist that we feed on the bread of life...
The bread that gave his life for us... for the life of the world.

We dwell in him... and he in us...
Forevermore.

In our theological tradition...

We really do have a rich tradition of faith.

During the English Reformation the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were developed as the defining statements of doctrine and practice of the Church of England.

They still help guide our faith today in the Episcopal Church and in the larger Anglican Communion.

They are included in our Book of Common Prayer beginning on page 867.

These words composed in the 16th century speak to our understanding of the Eucharistic feast...

Concerning Communion, it says:

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death:

...and with faith, receive... the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ... (BCP, 873)

The real presence of Christ is present in the bread and wine.

Now... this is mystery... a mysterious presence of God...

As it is not in our theological tradition to hold the opinion of Transubstantiation.

Transubstantiation which is the idea that the bread and wine change substance is not supported by Scripture... as the 39 Articles point out.

Therefore, we do not worship the bread and wine...

we worship God... the Triune God...

who is present in the Eucharistic meal.

Again turning to the 39 Articles of our Faith:

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith. (BCP, 873)

Eucharist...

The eating of the body of Christ is an act of faith.

And it is in faith that we receive the sacrament of God's grace.

Which is why before we partake of Communion the words are always spoken:

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

*Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.*

(BCP, 338 and 364f).

When our Lord says that he is the bread of life he refers to his sacrifice of which he gives his life for the life of the world.

It is also in his statement that his is the bread of life that he refers to the sacrament of Eucharist.

The eating of his flesh by faith so that we receive eternal life...

Invites his very real presence in our life.

This is why we take the communion meal with reverence and fear.

Before we receive, we confess our sins and receive absolution.

This is why we share in the peace with each other as to put aside any offenses so that we may come to the Lord's Table in unity and forgiveness.

This is why the table is open for those who have been baptized...

Because it is in baptism that we proclaim openly and sacramentally that Jesus Christ is our Lord, and that he is our Savior.

It is in Eucharist that we by faith truly confess that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life...

The bread which was broken for our sins.

The bread that we receive to remember how his brokenness...

heals our brokenness.

So today, on this the Lord's Day...

And any Eucharistic worship in the week...

On a special feast day...

When we receive...

and eat the bread of life...

May we be filled with his nourishment...

And may we remember the words of our Lord:

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.

Fill us Lord...

Amen.