

John 6:52-58

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So 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. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This 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."

The theme is about the bread from heaven. You know about Moses and how God fed the nation for decades when the people received the manna which was bread from heaven. But there was a problem in that the people, through their own selfish desires, wanted more and demanded it. We have talked about Jesus being the bread of life. After Jesus fed 5,000 men he taught a valuable lesson "do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life." This is similar to other lessons from Jesus about striving for the heavenly realm and not striving for materialism. The heavenly realm does not need replenishing through external stimulus and provides everlasting peace. Then Jesus taught the main point of our faith, believe in the one that God has sent. Believe in Jesus. The people that Jesus was talking to had a hard time understanding Jesus. They compare the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 men to Moses feeding the nation. However, their argument is based on a questionable premise. Moses did not feed the people; God fed the people.

This week my niece from Florida was staying with us. When she left to go back home, she left behind some Rosemary bread. To my knowledge I have never had Rosemary bread so I just had to try it. As I was eating it I noticed something long, thin, and black in the bread. So I said "look there is something growing out of this bread." Sitting on each side of me were women with better culinary skills than I am able to possess and they said in unison "that is Rosemary." To which I said "Ooh I thought Rose Mary was a person. One of them said "Oh that would be gross." Obviously we were all joking around. But it makes a valid point. If it is taken literally and I am actually eating a person named Rose Mary, it would most definitely be gross. Well, that is what is happening in today's Scripture.

Some of the people are actually taking Jesus literally. Jesus is teaching a very important lesson but the people have a hard time understanding him. Now imagine that you are there. You don't have the advantage of 21st century knowledge and information and you don't know about the sacrament, death, or resurrection. You are there and you do not yet know that this is the Son of God. You know he is a great teacher and you are impressed with the miracle of feeding 5,000 men. Then you hear the words "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." What would you be thinking? Think about it. "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life ... those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." This is a hard concept for the audience to grasp. If they don't fully understand Jesus then

they are not going to understand what he is talking about. The people did not fully understand who Jesus is and so they did not understand what he was talking about. Their thinking is purely physical. They are thinking Jesus is going to give them flesh to eat. Jesus said “this is my body” and we believe it. In John 10:7 Jesus said “I am the gate” and we believe that too. However, we do not believe that he is a gate literally. We know he is not swinging on hinges. It is a metaphor. All along Jesus has been teaching on a higher level of understanding about the heavenly realm.

We are fortunate to have the perspective of being in the 21st century. This is a totally different perspective from the responding audience. The lesson that Jesus teaches is on the importance of the sacrament of the Holy Communion which he secures on passion Thursday. The significance of the metaphor is the importance of the sacrament; it is a condition for receiving the gift of life. Accepting and receiving the Son of Man’s life is a very important aspect of our faith. We are to be one with Jesus. We have Jesus in us as an interrelationship with unity, togetherness, love, and acceptance. We receive Christ and we receive what he gives us. We experience salvation and absorb his teaching. His ways are our ways in this connected interrelationship. His flesh and blood abides in us. The very essence of his being is in us. It is an intimate relationship between Christ and the believer.

The metaphor “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood” is similar to the prophets of the Old Testament. Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll and Jeremiah found the words and ate them. This is not to be taken literally. The prophets did not chow down on the scrolls for supper. When the prophets consumed the Word of God, they were filled with the Word of God, the word was within them and they were one with the Lord. It is not that they physically ate the word; it is that they consumed the word and were filled with the Word of God. It is metaphorical.

The significance of Jesus giving his flesh is all about his death. It is the new covenant given through his sacrifice. The old covenant is based on Old Testament law. The new covenant is an ongoing relationship that is based on love. The flesh and blood of the Son of Man is food that endures for eternal life. He is the one that descended from heaven to give his life for the salvation of the world. The sacred food of the Lord nourishes our souls and we have the Spirit of the Lord within us. This is the true food because this is what we truly need.