

Sermon for The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

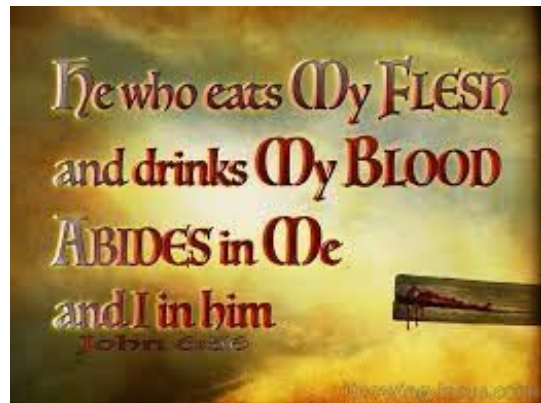
Date: August 15, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Proverbs 9:1–10

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 5:6–21

Gospel Reading: John 6:51–69



Sermon Text: John 6:51–69

Sermon Title: Eating Together is More Than Eating Together

Introit: Psalm 111:1-5,9; Antiphon: Psalm 111:10

Hymns:

LSB 589 – Speak, O Lord, Your Servant Listens
LSB 696 – O God, My Faithful God
LSB 618 – I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table
LSB 642 – O Living Bread from Heaven
LSB 655 – Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

Songs:

Church (Take Me Back) – Cochren
Forgive - This Hope
Grant Peace we Pray (Koine)
Agnus Dei
I Believe in Jesus - Keith Matten

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 6:51–69

[Jesus said:] “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.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eating is not just about eating. If it were dinner at home would be the same as a dinner at McDonalds®, and dinner at McDonalds® would be the same as dinner at the Old Mill restaurant. Clearly these three are not the same, and would not be the same even if the same kind of food was served.

Eating is not just about eating. Ask any woman if a brat and a beer at the game is the same as the soft lighting at Bella Victoria restaurant. Both might be enjoyable, but they are not the same. The choice of location makes a difference.

Eating is not just about eating. Wives (or husbands) that go to the trouble to cook a special meal do so as a sign of love. Families eating together talk about the day. Even how we eat in church matters. Like I put in a newsletter article not long ago. A pot luck dinner at church is different that sitting down family-style to create an atmosphere of closeness and hospitality, for our members and our guests.

Eating is not just about eating. It is so much more than that. So when we heard the invitation from the book of Proverbs, the invitation of Wisdom to come and eat at the feast prepared, it is about much more than simply eating. Likewise when we heard the invitation from Jesus, in the Gospel, to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, it is about much more than simply eating. These are invitations to us to share in the things of God.

From Proverbs, we heard that “Wisdom” has prepared a great feast. In fact so great that a special house has been built for it, with seven pillars – seven being the Biblical number of perfection. So great is this feast that beasts have been slaughtered for it. Meat in biblical times was reserved only for very special and great occasions. So great and expensive is this feast that we would expect only a select, chosen few to be invited, but then we are surprised.

Wisdom invites not the best and the brightest, not the rich and the powerful, not the ones who think themselves already wise. Those invited are the “simple,” those who “lack wisdom.” They are the ones invited to come in and eat and drink, because eating is not just about eating. More will be given than simple food and drink. Those who enter will be satisfied in both body and soul. They will receive not only Wisdom’s food and drink, but also Wisdom itself.

The goal of the feast, this Sacred Meal, is that those who come would leave their old ways and live, and walk in the way of Wisdom.

This Proverb, we refer to as Proverb 9, is a foreshadowing of our Lord's Holy Supper. The invitation by Jesus in the Holy Gospel is an invitation to this same Holy Meal. Jesus continues His conversation on the heavenly food that He has come to bring. He says He is "the Bread of Life." He speaks of what more will be given than just food and drink. In this meal eating is not just about eating. Like Wisdom's meal in the Proverbs, those who eat will be satisfied in both body and soul. They will receive not only Jesus' food and drink, but in fact, Jesus Himself. His very Body and Blood as food and drink. The result of this Feast, this Meal, is whoever eats and drinks "abides in Me, and I in him."¹

Who is invited to the wondrous Feast? You.

These two readings describe the same Feast. The One spoken of as "Wisdom" in the Proverbs is the Son of God. The Son of God before He was borne by Mary and became man. (Some may point to wisdom being called "she" in these verses, but that is simply a quirk of Hebrew grammar. It's not entirely unlike calling ships "she" in English.) Reading the Words in context makes it clear this invitation from Wisdom is really an invitation from the holy and living Son of God. He is inviting us to His Banquet, to eat and to drink, and in eating and drinking to share in the things of God.

When Jesus "came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man," He continued to offer this same invitation. Jesus ate and drank with many. He ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners, with prostitutes, with cheaters and thieves, with lepers, with outcasts, the unwanted and the unwelcome. He invited the poor, the lame, the blind and deaf, the "simple" to come and eat and drink with Him, but in eating and drinking to receive much more than food and drink. They were invited to hear and receive His teaching, His Word, His wisdom, and in hearing and receiving, to receive the gift of faith. Because eating is not just about eating. This could not be more true than when you eat with God Himself.

In the words of Jesus that we heard from John chapter 6, the banquet spoken of in Proverbs, and the banquet that Jesus points to is now the banquet

1 John 6:54

He describes in great detail to the crowds who gathered around Him at the Sea of Galilee, looking for more food.

He had just fed over 5,000 people with the five loaves and two fish. When they came looking for more He tells them: eating is not just about eating. They are looking for one kind of banquet, Jesus invited them to His Banquet! The Feast of Faith. The Feast of Wisdom. The Feast of life eternal. The Feast where He gives not just food, but where He gives Himself, His very Body and Blood, so that those who eat and drink do so not only physically, but also spiritually.

There we receive the gifts of God and are united with God, who says:

Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood
abides in Me, and I in Him. As the living Father sent
Me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds
on Me, He also will live because of Me.²

You simply cannot hear those words without thinking of the Feast which our Lord sets before us here on this table, this altar dedicated to the worship of a holy and living God.

Now, did the disciples understand that the first time they heard it? No. They were just as confused as those people who left Jesus because of these words were too hard to understand, too hard accept, or too offensive, or too controversial. You heard the question “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?³”

Yet when the disciples were later gathered in the Upper Room, and Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying, “Take and eat, this is My Body,” these banquet words of Jesus suddenly made sense. Here was His Feast of Body and Blood. Here was His Feast of Wisdom and life. Here was His Feast of forgiveness and the sharing of all the things of God. Here eating is not just about eating. It is about abiding in Christ, and Christ in us.

This Feast to which you have been invited!

You have been invited. Not just to eat and drink, but to receive and abide in Christ and Christ in you. To hear His Word and His Wisdom. To learn who you are and who God is. To receive the gift of faith. To confess your sins and

² John 6:57

³ John 6:52

receive forgiveness. To humble yourself, admit that we are simple and lacking, and to receive His filling care and love.

In coming to us, and feeding us with His Body and Blood, your Savior lives in you and you in Him. He takes all that is yours: your sin, your weakness, your contempt for others, and your death, and gives you all that is His: His perfection, His strength, His kingdom, His righteousness and His life.

When you come to this House, God's House, and when you come to this Table, God's Table, when you feed on this Food and Drink, God's Food and Drink, eating is not just about eating. This is so much more than a simple meal. This is you, participating right now, in the life eternal of Heaven, which has no end.

How sad it is that some will come to the Holy Table with hearts filled with sin, and leave clinging to that sin more than to Jesus. Some, unfortunately, do not want to come to this Feast to fill up on what God offers. They come for sentiment. They come for display. They come to exercise their rights, as if any of us could claim the right to sit at such a Table. For some, this talk of eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of Jesus is just too much. For others, admitting that we are sinful, that we are the ones who are lacking, is just too much. Still others are too busy to stop and eat. They would rather eat spiritually the way many eat physically. On the run, fast food, frozen food. This is not the McDonalds® of heaven. Those who eat physical this way find their health suffers because of it. So also the spiritual health of many who eat spiritual fast food suffers. Eating a Sunday snack at the Sacred Table of the living Lord is no different that eating a bag of chips at a fine dining restaurant. Such things are done by those who lack sense.⁴ Their actions are an insult to the Host. In this case the Host is God.

At a fine meal we dress for the occasion. Coming to this Table we must be properly dressed. How? In handsome suits and beautiful dresses? No. We must come clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness.⁵ Without Christ's righteousness we are cast out. Hear Jesus' Words:

When the King came in to look at the guests, He saw there one who had no wedding clothes. He said to him, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?'

4 Proverbs 9:4

5 Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 3:4; Revelation 7:9

The man was speechless. Then the King said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’⁶

The warning we heard in the 2nd reading, from Ephesians matters:

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of time, because the days are evil.⁷

There are many “banquets” in this world calling to you. Banquets of the things of this world, and the wisdom of this world. There are banquets of gossip, slander, and sin of every and any kind, and people will gorge themselves in the gluttony of such things. Many go to those banquets and filling their bodies, minds and souls not with the good things of God, but with the sinful, deceptive and destroying things of this world

Paul says, look carefully how you walk, and where you walk. Consider carefully where you are feasting, with what you are filling your mind, and with what wisdom you are swallowing. Be wise, because the days are evil. There are many feasts and banquets calling out to you and inviting you in, but all lead to death.⁸

There is only one that leads to life. There is only one where the death and resurrection of Jesus is on the menu. There is only one that can give you true health, strength, wisdom and life in forgiveness. Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life.” Indeed, He is.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

6 Matthew 22:11-13
7 Ephesians 5:15-16
8 Proverbs 7

