

Sermon – Where does your salvation come from

Scripture: John 6: 43-59

April 15, 2018

Today we continue down the road that Jesus' favorite disciple has laid out for us. In the last few sections we saw Jesus perform 2 big miraculous signs and he told his people, I don't want you to miss the meaning of those signs. And the meaning of those signs is this. I AM the bread of life. And when Jesus uses the phrase I AM you know that he is referencing himself with the divine "I AM" title and adding that he is *the source of life*. This is what he is explaining from verse 26 to 59. Now in this large section, you will see that there are two aspects of the I AM saying. There is a positive aspect and a negative aspect. Last Sunday we looked at the positive aspect. Don't worry, I will not put you on the spot by asking you about it because I had not specifically mentioned this aspect to you last Sunday. The positive aspect of the I AM the Bread of Life for all those people flocking to Jesus is this, they think Jesus can become a convenient source of physical bread for them. What they don't realize is Jesus can offer then something of much greater value: eternal life.

Then there is the negative aspect of the "Bread of Life" saying. That is what we are going to look at today.

As our passage opens, we notice that until now people were clamoring to get to Jesus and convince him to be their king. After Jesus plainly shares that he is the Bread of Life who came down from heaven, the mood in the crowd quickly changes. Now people start quietly whispering to each other saying, "how can this man say he has come down from heaven?" After all we know who this man is and where he comes from.

Jesus immediately senses these questions. But instead of trying to convince them, he decides that this is the time to filter out people but sharing the negative or difficult

aspect of his “I am the Bread of Life” message. You see bread on the shelf serves no purpose. The only time bread is serving its purpose is when it is eaten. And Jesus had fully intended this aspect of the image when he said, he is the bread of life. In verse 51 he says, ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh. Jesus is making it plain, that if you fully buy into the fact that Jesus being the Bread of Life, you are also buying into the idea that you have to be eating Jesus’ flesh to get the eternal life it promises. When the people hear this, they are stunned and yell, “how can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Of course, if you are a Christ follower, you know the answer. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We are a bunch of sinful people. And it does not matter whether our sins are big or small, because each of our sins are bad enough that God has to separate himself from us. And without God, we have no eternal life. At some point we realized this, acknowledged our need for Jesus, receive him into our lives. At some point we make it public, we get baptized and then participated in the Lord’s supper. The Lord’s supper is not just about eating a little cracker and a tiny bit of grape juice. It is about reminding ourselves that our relationship with God is totally sustained by the body and blood of Christ in us. This is the eating of Jesus that allows us to have that eternal life that Jesus is talking about.

But after coming to the Communion Table year after year, if we are not careful, it can become a mechanical act. Something you participate in without thinking deeply and actively about what we are doing. If that is you, then you need to hear these words from Jesus, the Bread of Life again.

First let me summarize what Jesus is saying in verse 53-58. What Jesus is saying is this, if you don’t eat and drink his body and blood you don’t have eternal life. His flesh is true food and true drink. And the way eternal life works is this, there is one source of life in

the universe and that is the Father in heaven. From the father, eternal life flows to His Son, Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ in turn passes that eternal life on to those who eat his body and drink his blood. And how does eternal life work in practice? You see, those people who have eaten and drank Jesus' body and blood here on earth, when that last day comes, which is judgment day, Jesus Christ will call them up to be resurrected and live eternally with Him.

You see what Jesus hopes the people hearing him that day, will one day understand is this, one day He is going to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Does that make any difference to any of them as individuals? Not really. Jesus' sacrifice only makes a difference to them if they realize that Jesus is dying for their specific sins. That is why he emphasizes that they have to individually eat his flesh and drink his blood. That eating and drinking takes the general act of Christ dying on the cross and makes it specific for each individual follower. But it is the painful part. If someone else has to suffer even a little bit for a mistake you made it somehow really hurts right? Have you ever thought what would happen if you were driving and got distracted for one second and ran over some innocent passerby? That would hurt you big time right? If that hurts, then imagine how much it should hurt that the most loving and pure person in the universe had to be whipped and whipped and crucified for your sins? Does that do something for you? Well if you have any conscience at all, it will really hurt. Unless we are really aware of the price of our forgiveness, it does nothing for our soul. In fact we have to always guard our hearts from becoming hard and one of the best ways to guard against a hardening heart is to remember that your eternal heart beats only because you and I have caused Christ to be almost beaten to death and then hung on a cross to die. If we don't feel it inside of us, we have not really eaten His flesh and drunk His blood. The bad news of the Good News is this. We have caused Christ to be broken so that we could be whole again. We killed our savior with our sins. But remember Jesus Christ allowed that because it was the only way we could have eternal life. The Good News of the Bad News friends is that

Christ loves us so much that He was willing to die in our place so that we could have a beautiful eternal relationship with him. Jesus message to every faithful follower is, you are worth it to me.

Now as your pastor one of my most important responsibilities is to keep the fire of your faith going. I cannot let your faith grow cold or let you lose your excitement of your first love, Jesus Christ, on my watch. And this passage is specifically meant to tell you that if you are mindful of the depth of pain and suffering that Christ had to go through to have a relationship with you then you will not allow your love for Jesus to become cold. You will not lose the excitement of your salvation as long as you remain in touch with the pain that our sins caused the body of Christ. It is as if we are eating the lamb sacrificed for our own sins.

Speaking of eating flesh, I am reminded of a story from my childhood. My immediate family grew up in the city of Mumbai, a highly urban and extremely populated city. Everything we eat we got from the grocery store. But every summer we used to go down to the south of India to a state called Kerala where my parents and grandparents are from. It was a village and a completely different world from where we lived. There in my grandparents home there was a stable with a couple cows just for milk for the family. We had goats and chickens. It was a big house with fields and forests all around it. The cows and goats would graze on the land, the chickens would lay eggs in different spots and we could go and collect eggs. And I remember the taste of those eggs, the taste of the milk boiled on a wood fired stove. I remember the catfish that was skinned, in the kitchen. But most of all I remember my grandmother, grabbing a chicken by the neck taking it next to the cow shed and giving it one wack on its neck to chop its head off. It is a gruesome site with blood gushing out of it like a fountain and the chicken screaming till it could scream no more. Sometimes the chicken would escape my grandmothers hands after its head was cut off and actually run around. And I think that is where the expression comes from which says, running around like a headless chicken.

I know many people who have given up eating meat after they saw how the animal was killed. But gruesome as it was, there is something very real to it. Growing up in the city I can admit to the fact that I am a real coward. I have never really killed an animal that I have eaten. And I am not sure I have the courage to even kill a chicken. Maybe if circumstances were different, I might get to that point. But the life I lead now affords me the possibility of being that kind of a coward. Because in the stores around me, the meat looks packaged and cleaned. And sometimes we get our meat with cute labels and logos of happy chickens or logos that don't show the animal at all. Don't get me wrong. I am not trying to criticize any of these brands even though I would not mind criticizing them if necessary. But I am pointing to the distance we put between our food and what it actually takes to get it on the table. In that sense I do have a respect for those who actually hunt and fish and eat what they have killed. It is very real because they are in touch with the real price of the meat they are eating more than the person who is paying 2.99 per pound at the store.

But there is a much bigger duplicity that Jesus wants his followers to avoid. And that is the duplicity of not dealing with the real price of salvation. What I am saying is, if we forget the price of our salvation even for an moment, then that is the moment we will fail to be Christlike and stumble. Never forget my friends where your salvation comes from!

There is another aspect of the negative dimension of the Bread of Life message I want to address. When Jesus first told people that he was the bread of life, none of those people were believers. So what you are looking at is Jesus' approach to sharing the Gospel to non-believers. And the fascinating thing about this is that just as people are actually clamoring to become his followers, he actually freely shares the most difficult aspect of his message. When people hear it, they are almost disgusted. No human being would have done what Jesus did. But this move of Jesus actually is really genius. You know why? Because Jesus is communicating an incredible lesson to evangelists through the

ages. And he is saying sharing the Gospel is not about convincing someone or even worse brainwashing anybody. That was not Jesus' way and it cannot be ours. In fact when you share the Gospel, there is a time when you will have to share about the difficult aspects of the decision to follow Jesus, starting with the bad news of the Good News and even the other aspects of the walk with Christ that involves the possible price they may have to pay and how everyone will have to carry their own cross they want to follow Jesus. And if that kind of message causes people to chicken out then so be it. It is not your job to convince people. Remember what Jesus said in verse ⁴⁴ *For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me.* It is the Father's job to draw people to Christ. It is not your job. Sharing the Gospel was never about convincing or brainwashing people. Sharing the Gospel is about planting seeds and paying attention to who in your vicinity, the heavenly Father is drawing towards Jesus. And to find that out that, you have to almost do the opposite of what you want to do, by sharing the bad news of the Good News, that you have to be willing to eat the flesh of Jesus and drink his blood to have the eternal life that Jesus promises.

If you have never accepted Christ as your personal Savior I do hope that this message does not put you off. Despite how it comes across our heavenly Father will speak to you in a special way and draw you to Christ and his sacrifice for you. If you are a Christ follower, as you participate in the Lord's supper right after this message or 20 years from now, I hope that this meal will still hold the same power that it once held for you. The power to move you to tears and the power to lift you up into Christ's heavenly presence itself. Remember you did not take Christ's life, he gave it for you. Because he loves you that much. Because you are worth it to him.

May His worth to you never diminish. Let us pray.