

Proverbs 9:1-6

John 6:51-58

Ephesians 5:15-20

“Give thanks to God at all times and
for everything in the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ.” AMEN!

There’s a picture in my office
that a person gave to me.

Her name was Gretchen and the
first time I met her was in her hospital room.

In that room as the sun streamed in
through the window, she told me that
she no longer wanted to continue
her chemotherapy.

She watched and wondered what I’d say.

Would I argue with her or root her on to keep fighting?

I’d be lying if I told you I didn’t want
to change her mind, but there was a
sureness in her voice and a
look of determination that told me

she had thought long and
hard over this decision.

Her mind was made up and now

she wondered would the pastor
she'd never met,
until that day, understand?

This encounter began a seventh month
journey with Gretchen.

One that she let me walk along with her.

Our weekly meetings with Gretchen and
her husband began immediately.

I would go to their home by the water and
they'd always offer a little something to eat.

A muffin or coffee cake
and a cup of tea.

Over this food and drink we shared
the important things in the heart;

they told me about their lives;
their families; the joys and regrets;
the love they felt for each other.

It is funny to think of the old saying,
“Sitting around to chew the fat.”

It was what we did,

but it wasn't small talk.

It was rich and deep and with
a lot of silence between the words.

Blessed time to chew on the emotion shared.

And each time we met, we'd lift up
and share in Holy Communion together.

We chewed on food and
we chewed on Spirit.

In a similar way, that is what Jesus is talking about
in our gospel lesson this morning.

Chewing on food and Spirit.

It started, what four weeks ago,
when we listened to the telling of
the Miracle feeding of the 5000+ people.

We've been "chewing" on this text ever since
and next week will conclude
Jesus' Bread Discourse.

I hope you are not too full to work
through it some more. :-)

It began when Jesus gave them plenty to eat
and there was plenty of leftovers because
people only took what they needed.

The thing was, they wanted more of that food
and followed Jesus to get it.

If it wasn't food then they
wanted more miracles,
more proof.

So Jesus told them, you look for food
but I want you to see past the miracle and
look to what I am offering you.

Intimate relationship with God.

That is the Spiritual food that
I want you to chew on.

But, in an interesting turn of events
we find that what Jesus told them was hard
for some to swallow.

It is a bit hard for us to swallow, too.

In bold language, John the gospel writer,
feeds us with language that conveys an
act of eating that can be offensive.

Jesus' language leaves us with
"metaphorical flesh stuck in our teeth."

That is how Commentator Robert Hoch puts it.

And it reminds us that John did say that
Jesus was the Word of God that became flesh.

And it all brings us to the larger theme of John.

The theme of "abiding" or remaining in God.

Of being called into a life, a love and
a relationship offered by Christ.

This is the "Living Bread" that we need.

Yet, it feels much easier to think of
chewing on bread than it is to chew on
Christ's body and blood.

It takes some time to chew on this and
to listen to what is both startlingly offensive,
extraordinarily human and deeply cleansing.

Isn't it just like us to want what we need and
then take more and more just to be sure
we're safer in the future?

Yet, Jesus reminds us that this stuff,
all the stuff, we are taking
is limited.

And what Christ is offering is limitless.

And limitless in difficult to put into words.

Food and Spirit to chew on and words from Jesus
that are hard to swallow. (Pause)

When I read through the gospel this week,
I couldn't help but notice how many times
a conjugation of the verb "to live" was written:
it is there 9 times.

Do we hear the calling from Jesus as
he offered his life: his blood, flesh and bone
to those around him, to us?

His calling was and
still is a calling that is offering,
life.

It doesn't happen a lot to us, or
maybe it does but we don't notice it.

Every once and a while we have an opportunity

to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

That is what we did when Gretchen,
her husband, and I gathered first around
the coffee table and then at the end
around her hospital bed set up
by hospice in her home.

Every moment was tasting and seeing
the goodness of God.

In this way Gretchen was like Christ or
a manifestation of what Jesus offers us
in this passage about the bread of life.

She received God and offered herself. (Pause)

The picture she gave me is
on the wall in my office.

The title is: “angels are watching over me...”

It reminds me of this text and
of the promise we hear:

God chose to be flesh and bone and blood.

God chose to be fully us - fully human.

And this God, through Christ, calls us
to dynamic relationships of sharing and receiving.

Word and Spirit to chew on and abide with.

Love laid down for you and for me
and strangers are now friends.

A calling to life, love and relationship.

AMEN!