

## SERMON

### BREAD OF LIFE

*Preaching text: John 6:51-58*

This has been a great week here at GSLC! I would like to thank those of you who helped with Vacation Bible School. Growing in our faith is so important. Some people have just enough religion in their lives to make them miserable. This year's VBS theme had to do with "grace." There is so much about our faith that can be confusing if we don't take time to nurture it. If you only have enough religion in your life to make yourself miserable you haven't heard about grace! Grace is God's love for no reason.

Once again in our Bible reading we hear Jesus is the Bread of Life. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> week in a row Jesus as the Bread of Life has been the focus in our gospel so it's important. But it can seem strange on the surface. It's one of those aspects of our faith that it's good to know more about.

In our gospel Jesus says, "I am the living Bread that came down from heaven." We probably understand that in light of communion. Jesus is the bread and wine. We take bread at communion so that makes sense. But to those listening as he was saying these things it wouldn't have. They didn't have communion like we do today.

Jesus shocked the people by saying that any follower of his had to eat his flesh (the word in Greek that Jesus used means to chew, to munch) and drink his blood. That was shocking to them because they considered blood sacred. They were never to taste it. And eating someone's flesh sounds a lot like cannibalism. You can understand why they were taken aback.

So, what did Jesus mean when he said, "I am the living Bread that came down from Heaven"? When we eat food, it physically becomes a part of our body, nourishing us and giving us life. When we take communion, it spiritually nourishes us and gives us life. When we eat food, it becomes a part of our body ... but when we consume Jesus' body and blood through the bread and the wine, we become a part of him. It's something of a reverse process. We become more engrafted into the mystical body of believers ... into Jesus' body.

We can't fully understand these things. God doesn't expect us to. Jesus simply asks us to do what he asked when he said, "Take this cup, and eat." And "Take this cup and drink." Jesus told us to receive him in Holy Communion through the bread and wine.

Jesus also asked that we would "do it in remembrance of him." What that means is that as we take the essence of Holy Communion ... which is his laying down his body and blood for us on the cross ... we then go out ready to love and serve others.

During WWII, the Red Cross made blood available to all who needed it ... ally or enemy. The Red Cross would also provide the soldier with the name of the donor so that, if he wanted, he could write a letter of thanks.

A custom developed among many medics in Europe that if a Nazi officer needed blood, they would find a Jewish donor. The medic would then tell the officer, "The bad news is, if left to your own strength and resources, you will die. The good news is, we have blood that will save your life ... from a Jewish donor. All you have to do is accept it."

A few refused the blood, saying they would rather die than accept the blood of a Jew. But most wanted to live and gladly accepted the blood from a fellow human being ... who happened to be a Jew. To accept life demanded, on their part, a new view and attitude.

To receive the Living Bread is to have our lives changed. To take Jesus into our lives is to be more alive, more responsive, more alert, more caring, more committed, more able to bear heavier burdens.

In our Bible reading not everyone was on Jesus' side. Some listened and their lives weren't changed at all because of what he had to say. Some went on like it was any other day. We have the same choice now. How is Jesus being a part of your life going to make things different?

There are lots of opportunities here for you to grow in your faith. We just had Vacation Bible School for all ages. There are always opportunities to serve. If you need help finding your place let me know! We need people to step forward as

ushers, counters, Council members ... Christianity is not a spectator sport. If you have been on the sidelines for a while now, watching others involved, now is the time!

In a few minutes we will be celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion again. We take, we eat, we share. We ingest this life-giving bread, this gift that changes everything. It challenges our current views and attitudes. It empowers us.

I pray for you; it be another reminder of the intimate relationship that God wants with you. The promise is for a fuller, more loving life today. What is your response going to be?

**AMEN.**