

13th Sunday after Pentecost
“Absolutely necessary...” John 6:51-58
August 18, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, John 6:47-53

“51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

52 The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

53 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

So far our text.

“Unless...” Did you hear Jesus say this word in our text? We use the word “unless” all the time in our conversations. We use it to present a circumstance, the only circumstance, that must be fulfilled, or an inevitable result will take place.

“Unless you eat all your veggies, you’re not going to get any dessert.”

Since the school year is beginning a common policy is...

“Unless you bring a doctor’s note, your absence won’t be excused.”

“Unless everyone is quiet, we’re not going out for recess.” It’s amazing how quickly the room becomes silent.

Well, Jesus uses the word “unless” to present the only circumstance that doesn’t result in the absence of life in a person. He begins by saying, “Most assuredly”... “Truly, truly...” Listen carefully to these words of absolute truth.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”

No exceptions. It’s absolutely necessary that you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood. Wow! That’s an attention getter! Did it get your attention? For Jesus is using the plural “you’ all” here. He’s talking to everyone you and me included.

Unless this eating and drinking of Jesus’ flesh and blood takes place you have no life in you. What’s Jesus talking about?

In a word – “faith”. Jesus is equating the eating and drinking of Him with belief. That’s the whole point that Jesus has been telling the people throughout this chapter 6. Jesus is the Bread of Life. Eat of this Bread, that is, believe in Him and live forever.

‘If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.’

“40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

This is not just a casual seeing of the Son of God. Jesus told the people in Luke 13 that to enter the narrow gate of heaven, there needs to be an intimate knowing and belief in Jesus.

“24 “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ 26 then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ 27 But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ 28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.”

A person can't point to one's ancestry as descendants of Abraham to have life in you. No! No exceptions! One must believe in the THE Descendent of Abraham, Jesus Christ. So, God repeatedly told Abraham:

Genesis 26:4

“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;”

A person cannot look within oneself for righteousness or life. What did Jesus say in Matthew 5?

Matthew 5:20

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

But, God wants all people to be blessed, saved, and have eternal life. So, He did the impossible for all people. He sent the Righteous One, Jesus Christ to become our righteousness.

“2 Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

You know children might hear of a birthday party that some friends are going to. Mom, I want to go too! What does mom say? Unless we get an invitation, we're not going to go.

Unless, there is an invitation to receive Jesus' righteousness, a person can't enter the narrow gate. So Jesus gladly extends His invitation to all!

“54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”

Whoever- no exceptions, no requirement other than eating and drinking of the real food of Jesus...believing in Him! Real food! Real nourishment for the soul is what Jesus gives!

It's an intimate fine dining affair. Not a fast-food drive by. It's so intimate that Jesus then tells us...

56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

Jesus who is the life of the world – becomes united with the believer through faith in Him so that where there was nothing living in the soul, there is now life! Now and eternally!

How often Jesus repeats to us that He will raise up the believer on the last day to eternal life!

What was the reaction of most of the people to these awesome promises? Most grumbled. Most turned away and walked with Him no more.

“67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

There is no other way to have eternal life, but faith in Jesus who is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We believe. We eat of Your flesh. We believe. We drink of Your blood.

Jesus continues to ask the same question to each of us today. Do you want to go away also? And may our answer by the power of the Holy Spirit be the same as Peter's. We believe. We know intimately that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And we thank you that You have sealed our faith in our baptism – in the baptism which Lance, Hailey and Braison are about to receive. What does Jesus promise to you in your baptism? Salvation! Assurance that you are a child of God! Intimately united with your God, the Triune God, through your faith in Jesus!

“16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:16

What condemns? Unbelief – rejecting Jesus and the gift of baptism that He freely gives.

And as you continue to study God's Word, He offers yet another special gift for you when you are confirmed, a seat at the Lord's Table! For Jesus gives not just a spiritual eating of Himself, His flesh and blood, through faith in Him... but a sacramental eating of His body and blood – in, with and under the bread and the wine.

Jesus gives this gift to His believers for your forgiveness. Even as your baptism daily assures you of your forgiveness in Jesus, so also eating and drinking His body and blood does so also in this extraordinary way.

Jesus wants all of us to continue to feed on Him through faith in His words of life, through remembering our baptisms, and through the eating of His very body and drinking of His very blood which He offered on the cross for all people.

Jesus became what was absolutely necessary for our salvation – the Christ, the Savior of the world. **Amen.**

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)