**John 6:51-69 (ESV)**

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.” **52** The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** 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. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** Whoever feeds on 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 whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. **58**  This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” **59** Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. **60**  When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” **61** But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? **62** Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? **63**  It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. **64** 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.) **65** And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” **66**  After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. **67** So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” **68** Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, **69** and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

**“A Relationship Based On Food”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As much as there are concerns with rising food prices. Nobody understands what this means better than you. Most here are familiar with the raw state of where our food originates. For all the additional things added to make a meal. What comes out of the fields lays the basis for everything else we eat. Having the stress of a dry year hurts more than the wallet. It affects your whole way of life with apprehension, fear, and countless other challenges day to day. Most are not foolish enough to deny that farming relies a great deal on God to give food for the body. Why would it not also be true that this good God is the same One who provides by His ways food for the soul?

If it takes a dry year for people to understand that food comes from God’s grace in the fields. It takes the only Son of God in flesh and blood to make known the food for a sinful world. 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.” Where a person works to bring benefit to feed the belly. Faith receives the food Jesus works to bring as benefit to our soul. The Word and Sacrament have a relationship established by God with us in eating. We naturally do this activity daily for life and so eternal life has its basis daily by faith in the Gospel. Jesus as the bread of life is to feed the soul of sinners.  
 Having to “eat” Jesus greatly bothered the Jews. The graphic nature of the language caused debate over what He meant. Rather than trying to explain it, Jesus only turned up the heat. He said, “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.” The direct manner of claiming His flesh as food did not sit well with their spiritual stomachs. None other than Jesus could save the soul of sinners from the grave. He was the greater miracle of God in the flesh. Compared to the short-term life God worked to provide food for Israel in the wilderness. “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

This food of faith has no artificial flavors for salvation. The Father sent His Son to save a starving world sentenced to death. It is to feed us by faith in this Savior. His flesh was without sin born of the Virgin Mary. His life a gift from heaven prepared to fulfill the Law. His death the flavor of salvation made for all on the cross. His resurrection the reason we eat by faith any food at all for the soul. Martin Luther writes,

“If the mouth is not filled with food or beer or wine, there is no eating and drinking. Thus faith, too, cannot be a mere thought of our Lord God; for thoughts are not sufficient… It is not enough that I recall how Christ was crucified, but beyond these thoughts I have a heart which relies on Christ, whose flesh and blood I admit into my heart, persuaded that they were sacrificed for me.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

How useless is faith without the right food! It is like eating wax fruit as if it is good for the body. The Word and Sacrament are not artificial flavors of men. Jesus meant what He said, “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.”

The anorexic nature of the Jews toward Jesus as God sent to save was not the only answer that denied food for the soul. Others disliked the taste of the food they at first received by God’s grace given in Jesus. His Word of needing the bread from heaven did not sit well within their lives. As pointed out, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” It was more than hard as if they could not understand, but out right insulting. Jesus already knew their bulimic characteristic saying, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” If His Word was not good enough neither would His resurrection and ascension be satisfying to sinners. What tripped them up was not the Truth, but their unbelief that stood in the way. They resisted the Holy Spirit who was at work so Jesus said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” Faith was a gift. God was not going to force them to eat what He already put right in front of their faces.

This food saves by faith alone with no added preservatives. To place restraints on God’s Word as happens so much today only hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. The call to repentance and faith in Jesus is to be straightforward. Yet, people naturally want to preserve what we have. This happens with our physical food and surprisingly enough we also want to preserve ourselves before God. Many praise the saying, “Actions speak louder than words.” Yet, this is opposite to God who works by saving sinners with His Word. Jesus tells us, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” Sinful flesh of man will not last before the Law, but God gives food for salvation to believe by the Gospel. There is no need for preservatives, which only turn out to be the food of false idols destined for hell. Even faith to eat from God has become a gift that He freely gives. Rather than finding offense, God offers the forgiveness of your sins. Rather than rejecting the Word, Jesus as the Word is at work for you.

Just because many of the disciples failed to keep down the food did not mean some had their fill. Rather than waiting for a question Jesus asked the final question to those closest to Him. It brought forth a great confession of faith by Peter that praised the food God gave for the soul. He said, “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.” Where a person has faith fed by the Gospel, works are not far off following Jesus. Peter would see the fullness of this food from heaven hung upon the cross, even while He fell away three times. The first would be last, but because he had the right food by faith in God’s Son. The risen Jesus would come to restore him with the bread from heaven unspoiled by sin, death and the Devil. This Word of life once gain fed Peter and sent him to do the same saying, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17).

This food gives nourishment to faith no off brands will do. The Word and Sacrament stand before us with Jesus asking, “Do you want to go away as well?” There is no real choice as if there are other options to eat. It is probably the most frustrating question to hear in a land where buffets let us eat whatever we want. However, Joshua made known where the strength of Israel came saying, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” St. Paul also exhorts the baptized to the Word saying, “Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-10). The blessing Sunday schoolteachers have is to teach with the food from heaven. It is what God entrusts to parents as the daily task to nourish the soul of their children. Dry fields are to remind us of a dried up faith starving in a world of sin, death and the Devil. Jesus as the bread of life has food enough for all. Come, eat and live. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. Luther, M. (1999, c1959). *Vol. 23*: *Luther's works, vol. 23 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Jn 6:53). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)