

13th Sunday after Pentecost John 6

John 6:51–69

Hymns: 818, 696, 743, 689, 625, 712,

**Introit: Psalm 34:12-22.**

P Who is the man who delights in life and loves a long life,  
C **that he may see good?**  
P Keep your tongue from evil,  
C **and your lips from speaking deceitfully!**  
P Turn away from evil and do what is good!  
C **Seek peace and pursue it!**  
P The eyes of the LORD are on righteous people,  
C **and His ears are attentive to their cry.**  
P The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,  
C **to cut off the memory of them from the earth.**  
P People have been crying out, and the LORD has been hearing them,  
C **and has been rescuing them out of all their troubles.**  
P The LORD is near to those who have broken hearts,  
C **and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**  
P The righteous person has many troubles,  
C **but the LORD rescues him from them all.**  
P He protects all his bones.  
C **Not one of them is broken.**  
P Evil will kill the wicked person  
C **and those who hate the righteous person will suffer punishment.**  
P The LORD redeems the lives of His servants,  
All: **and none who take refuge in Him will suffer punishment.**

**Collect:** Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know Your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, the life, that we may steadfastly follow His steps in the way that leads to life eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Old Testament Proverbs 9:1-10**

**Epistle: Ephesians 5:6-21**

**Gospel: John 6:51-69**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before, John 6: 51-69.

**51 I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.”**

**52 Therefore the Jews kept arguing sharply with one another: “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”**

**53 Therefore Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me and I in him. 57 As the living Father has sent Me, and as I live because of the Father, so that person who feeds on Me will also live because of Me. 58 This is the Bread that has come down from heaven. It is not like the bread that the fathers ate; they died. He who eats this Bread will live forever.”**

**59 He said these things in the synagogue, while He was teaching at Capernaum. 60 Therefore, when they heard this, many of His disciples said, “This is a hard statement. Who can listen to it?”**

**61 Since Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples were grumbling about this, He asked them, “Does this offend you? 62 Then what if you see the Son of Man go up to where He was before? 63 The Spirit is the**

**One who gives life. The sinful human nature is of no help at all. The Words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 However, there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and the one who would betray Him. 65 He went on to say, “That is why I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been given to him by My Father.”**

**66 After this, many of His disciples went back and did not walk with Him anymore. 67 Therefore Jesus asked the Twelve, “Surely you too do not want to go away?”**

**68 Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

We just heard the ending words of John 6. As you know John 6 is also known as the “Bread of Life” chapter. In order to properly understand the words at the end of the chapter, we need to take a few moments to review the rest of the chapter.

The events at the beginning of the chapter show us that Jesus is, in fact, the Lord of Creation. The chapter begins with the account of Jesus using a boy’s lunch to feed 5,000 men and their families. This happened in an empty area on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus fed the 5,000, He put the disciples in a boat and sent them back to Capernaum while He went up on the mountain to pray. The disciples encountered a headwind and were not able to cross the sea. When Jesus finished praying, He walked to the boat on the water. Immediately the headwind stopped and Jesus and the disciples landed on the other side. These two events demonstrate that Jesus is well able to supply us with all our needs and protect us from every danger.

Jesus and His disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee around dawn of the day after He fed the 5,000. The word immediately went out, and people from the surrounding area began bringing friends and family to Jesus for healing. Jesus healed and taught as He made His way to the synagogue in Capernaum.

Some of the 5,000 that Jesus fed the previous day also found Jesus as He was on His way to the synagogue. Although they never came right out and asked Jesus for more food, Jesus could see into their hearts and knew that they were only interested in Him in order to get more free food. Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach that although He supplies all our earthly needs, that’s not the main reason He came down from heaven and took on human flesh. His main reason for coming was to provide us with all our eternal needs.

The crowd wanted to compare Jesus and Moses. They claimed that Moses was better because he fed the entire nation of Israel for decades. Jesus only fed a few thousand for one meal. Jesus first of all pointed out that it was God who gave the manna in the wilderness and that Moses was the servant of God at the time. Jesus also pointed out that all the people who ate the manna in the wilderness are dead, but the people who participate in the eternal food that Jesus gives will inherit everlasting life and never die again.

Jesus taught that just as a person needs food to live here on this earth, so also a person needs eternal food for eternal life. He taught that He is that eternal food. As He taught that He is the eternal food, He explained that eating the eternal food meant believing in Him. He said, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom He has sent.” [John 6:29] He also said, **“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life; and that I should raise him on the last day.”** [John 6:40] With these words and others, Jesus taught that eating eternal food meant believing in Him.

It’s important that we understand all this context from the preceding verses of John 6, - and it’s especially important that we understand that when Jesus is talking about eternal eating, He is speaking of faith

that believes the everlasting words of Him. Otherwise, these last few verses of John 6 will sound a lot like cannibalism.

Jesus said, **“I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.”** Now that we know the context of these words, we know that Jesus is talking about believing in Him for eternal life.

The people in the synagogue struggled to understand what Jesus meant. They had not made the connection between eating and believing. The Jews ... disputed among themselves, saying, **“How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”** They know that Jesus is not talking about the kind of eating that they did the day before when they ate the bread and fish that Jesus gave them. Nevertheless, they don't know no any other kind of eating, they aren't able to figure it out, they're confused.

Jesus kept right on teaching. If you understand that eternal eating means believing, then Jesus' words make perfect sense. On the other hand, if you're like most of the hearers in the synagogue and don't understand ... if you're still thinking about eating bread and fish, then Jesus' words are disgusting.

Jesus said to them, **“Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me and I in him. 57 As the living Father has sent Me, and as I live because of the Father, so that person who feeds on Me will also live because of Me. 58 This is the Bread that has come down from heaven. It is not like the bread that the fathers ate; they died. He who eats this Bread will live forever.”**

The signs that Jesus performed in this chapter and others demonstrate that He is from God. It's as the blind man told the Jewish authorities, **“Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”** [John 9:32–33] As a man from God, His word is true. He has told the crowd that He is the bread of life from heaven. He claimed God the Father as His Father, and that He is the Son of God. He taught that He came to give eternal life to those who believe in Him. He explained that those who put their trust in His body and blood will have eternal life.

The rest of the chapter shows that there are two ways to react to Jesus' message: belief and unbelief. Some who heard Jesus' words said, **“This is a hard statement. Who can listen to it?”** The text then tells us that **many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.** This is the response of the unbeliever.

As Jesus watched His congregation shrink in size, He turned to His disciples and said, **“Surely you too do not want to go away?”** This gave Peter one of those rare opportunities to say exactly the right thing. **Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.”**

The reaction of these people shows the truth of the words written by the writer to the Hebrews: **“For the Word of God is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates even as far as the dividing of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow. It also discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”** [Hebrews 4:12] Whenever anyone proclaims the Gospel, some will believe and some, will not.

The full meaning of Jesus' words on this day became clear to the disciples when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Feeding on Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood means believing in His body broken and His blood shed on the cross. Christ's shed blood and broken body earned for us, the forgiveness of sins. That forgiveness is the source of eternal life for us, - and that is the central teaching of Christianity.

The “Bread of Life” chapter, John 6 is an excellent summary of the signs and teachings of Jesus as He began to prepare His disciples for His suffering, death, and resurrection. He taught them and He teaches us

that He is the source of eternal life. It's by faith in His body broken and His blood shed, that we receive the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. For those of us who live after His death and resurrection, these words point us to the cross that saves us.

Another thing we learn from this chapter is that some people will reject eternal life. In spite of the fact that Jesus is the only perfect teacher who ever walked this earth, some who heard Him rejected Him. We often forget that the Gospel divides people. The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel to draw people into the family of God. At the same time, the very same Gospel will drive away those who refuse to believe.

Jesus made it very clear that we are to proclaim the Gospel as we live our lives in this world. At the same time, we are not called to convert an unbeliever. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. When we proclaim the Gospel and say, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,**” [Acts 16:31] we are asking our hearers to do something that they cannot do. It's by the Holy Spirit that this can be achieved, we are relying on the Holy Spirit to give them the faith to bring them into the family of God. We are asking the Holy Spirit to work in them so that they also believe in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins that leads to eternal life. **Amen**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**  
**3rd HYMN: 743,**

#### **Prayer of the Church 13th Sunday after Pentecost**

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.  
*Brief Silence.*

P For the Holy Christian Church, that she follow only Christ, as the Holy One of God, listening to His words of eternal life.... Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P For wisdom and a right knowledge of God, that His people not be led astray by empty words and false teaching; for faithful and confident Christian witness' to the world in word and deed, that others be drawn to hear the words of spirit and life.... Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P For all believers, that they love and submit to one another, avoid works that are unfruitful and shameful, and build one another up in reverence for Christ, Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P For future church workers, that the Holy Spirit lead them to the study of their vocations, and equip them to serve according to His will and their calling; for pastors, and church workers, that when they speak the truth in love, those who hear them not to turn back or reject the Word of God but rather hear it in repentance and believe.... Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P For all those who hold offices of public trust in our land, that they serve according to the will of God and for the good of all people; for all in law enforcement, and those who judge in our courts, that they not act for selfish gain, but for the benefit of the people.... Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P For the sick and dying, those who suffer from depression, and those in any affliction, [*including* ] that they rely on God's promise of grace and comfort in the knowledge that He will never leave them nor forsake them, Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Lord, Your Son provided for the needs of the people by feeding thousands with just a few loaves of bread. Provide for our needs today. Our Nation is so dry, stock and crops are failing. Farmers and their families are going to the wall. Send rain and sun in the right measure and just the right time so that crops might abound and every hungry mouth be fed not just here but also around the world.  
Lord, in Your mercy,  
C **hear our prayer.**

P Lord Jesus, in the fellowship of this altar, we come and taste Your goodness as You give us Your body and blood to eat and drink under simple bread and wine. Let us not take this sacred meal for granted, strengthen our faith in the wondrous things You've done for our salvation, and increase in us Christian charity towards our neighbours. Lord, in Your mercy,  
C **hear our prayer.**

P O God, our faithful God, hear our prayers, deliver us from all evil, and help us to walk in love, for to You alone we give all glory, honour, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**  
**4th Hymn: 689**