

Part II: Word Pictures

Lesson Six

The Bread and Water of Life

Introduction

List the most “successful” Christian preachers. **Mike Novotny, Mark Jeske, Joel Ostein, Billy Graham, Martin Luther, St. Paul, Jesus.**

One of the most famous sermons Jesus ever preached is recorded in John chapter 6; we call it the Bread of Life discourse. What happened after Jesus preached these words? (See John 6:66.) **Many, including his followers, deserted him. Jesus asked his disciples if they would leave him, too.**

Studying God’s Word

Jesus’ words in the Bread of Life discourse—when he said that salvation only comes from *eating* his flesh and *drinking* his blood—weren’t anything new. Eating and drinking are used to picture salvation throughout Holy Scripture.

Satisfied with the goodness of the gospel

The basic imagery of eating and drinking is on display for us in two sections of apocalyptic imagery.

Read Ezekiel 2:8–3:4 and Revelation 10:8–10.

1. What point is illustrated with Ezekiel and John eating the scrolls? **They were to take the words of God deep within themselves. We use the same figure of speech when we talk about digesting something that we’ve read or been taught.**
2. Why do you think God’s Word turned John’s stomach sour? **God’s Word also brings a message of law and condemnation—something that’s difficult “to stomach.”**

Read Isaiah 55:1-3.

3. What picture is God using here? **A rich banquet**
4. How do you know he’s talking about the hearing of his Word? **The second parts of verses 2 and 3 make that clear.**
5. What truths about the gospel are on display in these verses?
It’s wonderful, it’s satisfying, it’s free, it’s for all people, and it gives life

6. God places great emphasis on the difference between the gospel and other “foods.” The gospel is true “food” that satisfies, while other things on which we “spend money” don’t satisfy us. What unsatisfying things do people work hard for? Contrast these things with the gospel. **People can spend their lives in pursuit of peace and fulfillment in any number of ways: in work or family, in health and hobbies, in any number of religions or philosophies. None of them, however, give the true peace that comes with the forgiveness we have in Christ Jesus.**

Psalm 90:14, Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

Jesus, the Bread of Life

Jesus often describes himself as the Water of Life (John 4:13,14 and Revelation 21:6) and the Bread of Life. The words of Christ in John chapter 6 are especially powerful and poignant. However, even Lutheran commentators commonly misunderstand them.

Read John 6:25-59. Look for reasons for/against a reference to Holy Communion.

7. Many have incorrectly (but perhaps understandably) identified Jesus’ words here as describing Holy Communion. What makes it clear from these words and the broader context of Scripture that this is *not* what he’s speaking about? **Why might people think it is HC?** “v. 51 This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

Why not? 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life (HC is not a guarantee of eternal life, can be received for damnation, if not prepared)

53 unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (OT believers, baptized babies are also saved)

At this point in time, Jesus hadn’t instituted HC.

8. If Jesus isn’t speaking about Holy Communion here, what does he mean when he speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood? (Hint: Remember the sections from Ezekiel, Revelation, and Isaiah.) **We are to completely “take in” and “digest” the message of God’s Son who took on human flesh and blood. Those truths should become fully part of us, nourishing us from within. Salvation is not possible without those truths**

Summary

Key Points:

- Eating and drinking are used as pictures of taking the truths of God into our hearts and firmly believing them.
- God invites us especially to do this with the gospel message. When we “feed on” what Christ has done for us, we find a banquet of God’s love that will never fail to satisfy us.

The crowds who heard that true satisfaction and life could only be found in Jesus and his words were offended and left him. God grant us a different reaction. May we go back to his words and the truth of his incarnation, “chew” on what he tells us, “digest” it, and be fully satisfied!