**Sermon Pentecost 12B – John 6:51-58 – 15/8/21**

Youtube Sermon Link: <https://youtu.be/qtaCghZi1X4>

Some of the best, most life enhancing occasions we experience are when we spend time with close family and friends over a meal. As you talk and eat and laugh together you experience the joy and warmth of close human interaction that we all need.

**Relationships give us life!** Or maybe I should say good relationships give us life, because bad relationships can suck the life out of us. Broken relationships can leave us feeling drained and broken and dead. Good relationships on the other hand are what keep us going and sustain us even through the most difficult circumstances life can throw at us. Studies have shown that people who regularly experience good relationships with family and or friends tend to live longer, stay healthier and recover faster when ill. Good relationships in a very real sense are life sustaining.

**There is one relationship that will not just give you physical and emotional life, but also life on the spiritual level.**  This relationship will give you life in all its fullness. This is your relationship with the Bread of Life, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Just as bread is needed to sustain the life of your body, Jesus the Bread of Life is needed to sustain your life both now and into eternity. Jesus tells us we are to eat his flesh and drink his blood so that we may receive life.

**If we eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood then he will live in us in just as bread lives in us when we eat it**. We all know that the nutritious parts of the food we eat are absorbed into our blood stream and give life to all the cells of our bodies. In the same way when we eat the bread of life he enters every part of our body and soul imparting his life to every cell. Jesus lives in us and at the same time we live in him. His life spreads throughout our bodies and souls and his glory shines in us. As the body and blood of Christ is absorbed into every part of our body he changes us more and more into his likeness as we receive his life.

**What is Jesus taking about when he says we are to eat his flesh and drink his blood?** Obviously he isn’t talking about some kind of cannibalism. Could he be perhaps be talking about the eating and drinking that happens in Holy Communion, or is there some other sort of eating and drinking going on? The answer is that Jesus is most likely talking about eating and drinking that happens on more than one level.

**On one level Jesus could be talking about ingesting and digesting his words, which are words of life.** We find a similar image in Proverbs chapter 9, where in verse five, Wisdom says, *“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.”* This is an invitation to eat and drink in the words of wisdom as you would eat and savour the best fresh bread and the best wine. To really enjoy good food you should take small mouthfuls and chew them slowly, savouring each mouthful before swallowing. The way to enjoy good wine is to smell the aroma of the wine, take a sip and keep it in your mouth long enough to enjoy every sensation of flavour the wine has to offer. In the same way to gain wisdom we are to take small pieces of God’s word and chew over them, taste them and experience their flavour.

**On one level Jesus is encouraging us to dine on his words, extracting all we can from them just as we would get the most out of good food and wine.** As we eat and drink Jesus’ words of life, we eat and drink the life of the body and blood of Jesus. These words of life give us life and salvation. They create and strengthen our faith in Jesus and give us life to the full. Jesus is encouraging us to have a regular diet of God’s Word. As we dine on God’s Word the Holy Spirit uses the Word to build a relationship between God and us, and in that relationship is life and salvation.

**On another level Jesus is also talking about Holy Communion, where as we eat the bread and drink the wine we eat his body and drink his blood.** We eat the body of Christ that dies for our sins, we drink the blood that was shed for our sins. As we eat the body and drink the blood of Christ we receive the gift of forgiveness. We also receive the gift of life, because we are eating and drinking the body and blood of the resurrected Jesus. In Holy Communion the resurrected body and blood of Christ enters our body and the power of Jesus’ resurrection enters every cell in our body. Every time we receive Holy Communion we receive another dose of Christ’s resurrection.

**When Jesus says we are to eat his body and drink his blood, he is reminding us that God gives his gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation in two ways.** One way is through his Word and the other is through his Sacraments. As we read, hear, savour and chew on God’s Word he gives us forgiveness, life and salvation. As we eat together around the table of the Lord and we eat the body and drink the blood of Christ, God forgives us and gives us life and salvation. God does all this through Jesus the bread of life who came down from heaven for you.

**Amen.**

**Pastor Rolf Lungwitz**