

Pentecost #13

8-22-2021

Rev. J.V. Trautwein, Pastor
Rev. Karen Pugatch, Guest Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“In today’s gospel many people take offence at Jesus’ invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus’ disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John’s gospel for Peter’s confession of faith. ‘To whom can we go?’ asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. ‘You have the words of eternal life.’ In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Morning Has Broken”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 34:15-22

“The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous,
and his ears toward their cry.
¹⁶The face of the Lord is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
¹⁷When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears,
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
¹⁸The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.
¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous;
but the Lord delivers him out of them all.
²⁰He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.
²¹Evil shall slay the wicked;
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
²²The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Beautiful Savior”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Holy God, your word feeds your people with the life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord . Amen.”

1st Reading: [Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18](#)

2nd Reading: [Ephesians 6:10-20](#)

The Gospel: John 6:56-69

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+6%3A56-69&version=NRSV>

Hymn of the Day: [“Amazing Grace”](#)

The Message: Rev. Karen Pugatch ([Video Link](#))

The Holy Gospel is according to John the 6th chapter.

Glory to you O Lord

⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood (abides) remains in me and I in them. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. It isn't like the bread your ancestors ate, and then they died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

⁶⁰ Many of his disciples who heard this said, “This message is harsh. Who can hear it?”

⁶¹ Jesus knew that the disciples were grumbling about this and he said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² What if you were to see the Human One^[h] going up where he was before? ⁶³ The Spirit is the one who gives life and the flesh doesn't help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ Yet some of you don't believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning who wouldn't believe and the one who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He said, “For this reason I said to you that none can come to me unless the Father enables them to do so.” ⁶⁶ At this, many of his disciples turned away and no longer accompanied him.

⁶⁷ Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered, “Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We believe and know that you are God's holy one.”

⁷⁰ Jesus replied, “Didn't I choose you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.” ⁷¹ He was speaking of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ.

Preachers all over who follow the RCL are breathing a sigh of relief this morning because this is the last reading in the “bread of life discourse” We have been in John 6 since July 25th! It began with the feeding of the 5000 and ends here with Simon Peter's confession. Why so much talk of bread?

We know that bread was extremely important in the diet of people making up at least 50% of their caloric intake. This was especially true for those who had little. The bible is full of stories about the sustaining qualities of bread. Recall the story of the widow of Zarephath in the book of 1Kings. Or that of Elijah as he flees the priests of Baal the angel gives him bread to sustain him on the journey. Of course there is manna. Jesus was born in *Beit Lechem*-house of bread. Bread is mentioned nearly 500 times in the bible!

But I really don't want to focus on bread this morning-don't get me wrong What Jesus is saying about the importance of abiding with him through the bread of life-it is important and foundational to our belief. This is after all, how the Lord's Supper is introduced in John's gospel. I want to spend some time instead, thinking about the response of the disciples to these words.

What you are saying is harsh! Who can hear it? I don't know about you, but there is much that Jesus is saying that is harsh and difficult to hear -after all Jesus is telling us to eat his flesh and drink his blood-ewwh. That is just gross-no wonder the early Christians were accused of cannibalism!

We have the benefit of hearing these words filtered through the lens of the synoptic gospels and the story of the last supper. We hear this is my body and think bread or wafer-we hear blood and see the cup of salvation. We have the benefit of theology that tells us this is all about the incarnate way of living. It is about how we become the body of Christ for the world because Jesus took on flesh and dwelt among us full of grace. We are called as disciples to take on Christ and follow his way in the world-a difficult way indeed. And still, these words are harsh-who can hear them?

It is difficult to hear Jesus telling the crowd that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood without getting a little "squirmy" in our seats. People today still have difficulty with these words-there are some who hear sexual overtones, others who just can't get past Jesus saying "Eat me," some who are turned off by traditions that teach we eat the actual body and drink the actual blood. Imagine how those in the crowd heard these things.

And so, some of those who were fed and forgiven, some who were healed, some who followed Jesus around the countryside hear these words in the synagogue in Capernaum decide that it is all too difficult and they leave.

If we are honest with ourselves, there are times when we too want to leave. It is a part of our make-up to want to escape dangerous and difficult situations. Truth be told, acting on the impulse to leave, can be lifesaving.

Jesus does not go after them, does not candy-coat what discipleship looks like to get them to stay. Jesus has told them it is difficult, told them that it requires sacrifice, told them that they must take him on, become him, abide in him and he in them, told them eat me-they are not ready for the challenge, they do not yet trust the promise that abiding with Jesus provides-they do not let the Spirit enter-instead, they choose to leave.

Jesus turns and asks the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" I wonder how he asked- was he angry, despondent, gentle? He asks, we are told knowing what the answer will be, knowing that among those he has chosen is one who will betray him.

Simon Peter pulls a Jesus- answers the question with a question- "Lord to whom shall we go?" and also a confession of faith- "You have the words of eternal life."

What does it mean for us to confess that we follow Jesus? What is confession anyway? In his book *Consolations* David Whyte writes, "confession is a stripping away of protection, the telling of a truth which might once have seemed like a humiliation, become suddenly a gateway, an entrance to solid ground; even a first step home. To confess is to free oneself, not only by admitting a sin or an omission but to profess a deeper allegiance, a greater dedication to something beyond the mere threat of immediate punishment or the desolation of being shunned. To confess is to declare oneself ready for the more courageous road..."

When we confess that we are Jesus' disciples we too speak out loud that we are ready, with God's help, to actively follow, to do the work, to face the danger, to love and serve. It is a dangerous thing to do- it was for the disciples and it is for us. Being in relationship with Jesus puts us at odds with the powers of the world.

But we have the bread of life and the cup of salvation, we have the words of eternal life offered in the gospel. We are sustained for the journey by the meal that our Savior provides. We are not alone, God is with us. God makes a community for us. This is the promise. In this discourse, Jesus explains the meaning of the sign of the feeding of the 5000. Jesus is trying to get the crowd to understand that despite the difficulties and trials what he offers is eternal life. Jesus offers abundance here and now and for eternity. God is offering life. Some just don't hear it that way.

Maybe this is why we often use this passage for our Gospel acclamation. Peter is articulating what it means to abide with Jesus, to be in relationship with Jesus. We were not there when 5000 were fed, but in the words of the Gospel we encounter Jesus and what Jesus took on flesh to offer- abundant life, forgiveness. The words of eternal life.

There are ups and downs along our faith journey- there will be times when we feel weak or defeated, when we want to walk or even run away. Like the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea, we too can cry out and the Lord will offer Peace to our frightened selves and a meal that nourishes unto eternal life. Amen

Anthem: ["My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Father of all creation, as summer begins its final month and daylight becomes shorter the harvest of summer growth has become evident. We are thankful for all that this summer's natural world has and is producing. But we also recognize that we are living the results of natural and man-made disasters. Hurricanes, tornados violent storms, wild fires, floods, drought, earthquakes, and the results of war continue to create pain and suffering among so many. Help us to the realization that we are to be there for each other; sharing our bounty and love with those who may be suffering. Let us set aside self-greed and false prophets which are blocking us from actively caring for each other.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["O God Our Help in Ages Past"](#)

Announcements

With great appreciation we thank Pastor Karen Pugatch for being our guest pastor today..

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291