

Bon appetite! Maybe you've heard that phrase as you are about to sit down to eat. Bon appetite! It's a French phrase which means, "good appetite" or "enjoy your meal," and it fits well with our theme for today, "Crave the food that gives eternal life." So, what do you think? Do you have a good appetite for the food that gives eternal life? Bon appetite? Today in the gospel Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." and that confused a lot of people. So, what do you think? Do you enjoy your meal of the bread of life? Bon appetite?

Jesus said these words at the end of his first year of ministry. And for the most part, the first year was a very good one for Jesus. He had been up North, by Capernaum and the people just loved him! They loved how he preached. They loved how he healed people. They loved him so much that when he sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee over 5,000 people chased after him! And on the far side of the lake, that's where he fed that whole crowd with just 5 loaves of bread and two fish. Well now they were even MORE obsessed with him. So, when he went back home across the lake, you can imagine what they did. They ran around the lake again. But when they got to their hometown of Capernaum, Jesus preached a sermon that confused them. After the sermon, **"Many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."** You see, they had an appetite—but not a bon appetite. They wanted bread, but Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

When I read from John 6 before I asked you to find some good things Jesus promised will come from the bread of life. Which ones did you find? There are some big ones in there!

Right away in **v. 51** **"If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever."** And if you think that doesn't include you, look at the end of the verse, **"This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** The whole world certainly includes you.

Then there's **v. 54**, not just eternal life but, **"I will raise him up at the last day."** Eat the bread of life and you will rise from the dead!

**v. 56** **"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him."** Eat the bread of life and you get Jesus always with you, living in your heart.

We could go on more! There's at least a few more times in there he says the bread will give you eternal life. So, when the crowd in Capernaum heard this **"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."** Same as our theme for today, "Crave the food that gives eternal life."

Which leaves us with one very important question... How? How do we eat the bread of life?

At first the crowd thought that the bread of life was the bread that could fill up their bellies. Do you ever catch yourself thinking that way? Thinking that the most important thing God can do for you is put food on your table, or money in your account? Well that's not the bread of life. Jesus said, **"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life."** (27) The bread of life is not normal food.

Then what is the bread of life? Jesus said, **"This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."** But... **"Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"** (52) Obviously Jesus doesn't want us to cook him up and eat him with our teeth. He said, **"I am the LIVING bread."** Not dead meat. It must not be a physical eating, but a spiritual eating. The bread of life is not physical eating.

This crowd in Capernaum wasn't ready to trust Jesus for spiritual help. **They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven.'"** (41) To them Jesus was a good teacher, a great role model, but spiritual authority comes from Almighty God who lives far away in heaven, not from their friend and neighbor, Jesus. He seemed to normal to be God. But God said, "If you want to have God then here he is, looking like regular man with a mom and dad. **"This is my**

**beloved Son, whom I sent to you. With him I am well pleased. Listen to him.**" The bread of life is Jesus.

So, some people have said that this whole sermon must be about the Lord's Supper. Well let's look at Jesus words closely. **V. 53 "Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."** Is that true of communion? Two years after Jesus said this he was hanging on the cross in our place, and on the cross right next to him was a criminal. Right before he died that criminal said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Now I don't know a lot about that criminal, but I know he never had time to take the Lord's Supper. But Jesus promised that even though he didn't eat and drink Jesus body and blood in the communion, he had eternal life. Jesus gave him eternal life through his words. The same goes for every child who goes to heaven before they take communion. Jesus gave them eternal life through baptism. Jesus also gives us eternal life through the Lord's Supper, so if you are prepared and you've examined yourself, you'd be crazy not to take communion when it's offered to you. But it is possible to have eternal life without the Lord's Supper. But look at this verse. Jesus says it is **TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE** to have eternal life unless you eat the bread of life. So, the bread of life must not be the Lord's Supper.

So, what is it and how do you get it? Well, Jesus said it's the only way to get eternal life. What's the only way to heaven? What if it's Jesus? What if eating the bread of life, and eating and drinking Jesus is just an extended metaphor for believing in Jesus? Let's try it out. Let's read through these passages and every time we get to an eating or drinking part, you substitute the words, "**BELEIVES IN JESUS.**" Look at the screen and you read the underlined words.

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

53 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you believe in Jesus eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever believes in Jesus eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever believes in Jesus eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who believes in Jesus feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever believes in Jesus feeds on this bread will live forever." 59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Believe in Jesus, that's eating the bread of life. Jesus, true God, full of life, put on human flesh and blood so that he could be just like us—so that he could die just like us. And he experienced hell, body and soul, so that we can live forever in heaven, body and soul. Putting your trust in the life and death of Jesus – that's eating and drinking his flesh and blood.

You know eating is a great metaphor for believing in Jesus. When's the last time you tried a new food you'd never seen before? I visited China a few years ago and we were served some meats that I had never seen before. I didn't even know what animal it came from because the menu was all in Chinese. So I gave that meat a very skeptical look. A lot of people give Jesus that same skeptical look. But maybe the new food you tried actually looked pretty good. Then if you're curious, what do you do before you bite it? You give it a sniff. Lots of people give Jesus a curious sniff too. But if you come home to the smell of your favorite dinner, and you see it on the plate, you know that's good food, and you bite right in. Those who trust that Jesus is the one who can sustain their life, who can give eternal life, they bite right in. Then, just like good, healthful, nourishing food, Jesus becomes a part of them.

What about you? Do you crave the food that gives eternal life? Do you have a bon appetite for the bread of life? Jesus, the bread of life will keep you spiritually healthy, but the bread of life isn't always what we reach for when we are spiritually hungry.

One of my favorite authors who writes about food is Michael Pollan. When he talks about things like Cheetos, Twinkies, and fruit snacks he doesn't even call them food. He calls them "edible food-like substances." And there are some edible spiritual food-like substances too, fake food that make us think we are sustaining our lives when we are actually starving. Here's a simple test to figure out what your spiritual junk-food is. Start a sentence, "I'll be alright if/because..." and however you end it, that's your Twinkie.

Some people might say, "I'll be alright if I've got enough money." Then all your satisfaction depends on your business staying in the black. It all depends on getting enough in the retirement account, on getting all the bills paid, on getting out of debt. But what if you don't? If the market crashes, or if your car crashes, your soul will be starving!

Some people might say, "I'll be alright if I can keep my reputation." Then all your satisfaction depends on what other people think of you. But what if they find out what you know? What if they find out that your life isn't as nice and neat and cheerful as it seems? And what are you going to do about the fact that Almighty God already knows the truth? Your soul will get hungry!

Here's one I know we all say, "I'll be alright if I can just keep God's commandments a little better." If I just love my neighbor more, if I go to church more, if I listen to my parents more, if I pray more, if I read my Bible more, then I can feel good about myself. Then God will love me, then I'll be ok. You know what Martin Luther said about those things? He said those are like parsley flakes, the kind you sprinkle on top of big old pot-roast and trying to do enough good to satisfy your soul is like sitting down for dinner and trying to fill up on a sprinkling of parsley. It's not fun, and it doesn't work! You need the pot roast,

some real meat and potatoes that can fill us up better than spiritual junk food.

Jesus says, "**My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.**" (55) Trusting in Jesus life and death, that can fill you up on the inside because it's not about you! It's all about Jesus, and it's already done. Jesus has been sacrificed in your place for thousands of years, and there's nothing you can do about it. Frankly your sins have been paid for whether you like it or not. There is nothing you could do to make God love you more, there's nothing you can do to make God love you less, and there's nothing you can do to make God stop caring for you every day.

So what if the worst happens? What if the market crashes? What if everyone finds out your secret? What if you can't keep God's laws the way you want to? Then Jesus flesh and blood has still been offered to take away your sins. God still loves you, still cares for you, will still take you to live with him in heaven forever. That's why Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus, and only Jesus, can fill up your soul. Believe it.

Today Jesus says to you, "**I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.**" He is the bread of life, no parsley, no junk food. He is a real savior with flesh and blood who came to satisfy your hungry hearts. For two years I was bringing that meal to college students in Minnesota, and now I consider it a high honor to bring the bread of life to you.

I guess that makes me your new waiter. This is our new life together. Together let's fill up on Jesus so that we have no fear about money, or reputation, or guilt or death. Your Savior Jesus has done it all. Believe it.

Bon appetite!