

PENTECOST 13
PROVERBS 9:1-6
EPHESIANS 5:15-20
JOHN 6:51-58
AUGUST 18, 19, 2018

YEAR B

A couple of months ago Denise and I were on vacation and went to a small city in Mexico. It was a city that was surrounded by Puerto Vallarta and was a working class community. We saw lots of interesting things in that city including The San Miguel Catholic Church that was open for tourists to go and pray, look around or just to sit and rest. In that church was a 2000-pound statue of Jesus on the wall over the altar. One of the other highlights of our time was a food tour of Mexican foods. We went to seven or eight places where we were fed with a variety of foods. We did not eat an entire meal in any of the places we went but we had our fill of food by the time we were finished with the tour. With each food came a story about the food and about this town. Walking through the small city we heard stories about the people and their ways of life. I started to appreciate them as I heard of their struggles but also their compassion for the people around them. Today is the fourth week in a row hearing the message about Jesus being the bread from heaven. It has been a story that tells about bread but also about the teaching our Lord gives.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

Jesus continued to teach the Jews about eating flesh and blood. They continued to not understand what he was talking about. They struggled with Jesus being from heaven but also about eating flesh and drinking blood. It was forbidden in the Jewish law for anyone to eat the flesh of another person. It was also against the Jewish law for anyone to eat the blood of an animal they might have slaughtered to eat. There were

specific rules or laws about preparing meat. Blood needed to be completely out of any meat they would eat. The crowds argued about this teaching of Jesus as they sought to understand. You and I have heard these words as well. We might also want to know what Jesus is teaching. We want him to tell us plainly. Our Lord wants to feed us with the bread of life so we will come to a stronger and closer relationship with him. It is not merely a teaching about Holy Communion but also about receiving Jesus completely into our hearts and our lives. Jesus has already welcomed us into his life. Eating bread and drinking wine feed us with the heavenly and spiritual food of Jesus.

This was an extremely difficult conversation and teaching for the Jews listening to Jesus. They were OK with the initial feeding of the 5000. They enjoyed everything Jesus gave them and there was some left over. We might compare the feeding of the 5000 as just the appetizer. They would eventually receive so much more from the Lord. They received bread and fish but the Jews would need to go with Jesus to the next place before they could receive the next part of the teaching. They would need to continue hearing the message of the gospel, which is the message of salvation.

Those that followed Jesus to the other side of the sea had questions and they became frustrated because they could not understand what Jesus was teaching. When the people were searching for more bread and fish Jesus taught them about the bread of life. They were seeking to know physical things when Jesus was teaching them spiritual things. He was feeding them the bread of life. This bread of life is not mere loaves and fish but is a full course meal. It is a meal that gives life. Jesus says that everyone that eats this bread lives forever. Eating the bread of life and drinking the blood of Jesus requires faith. It requires us to continue to

grow in faith and love. We seek great knowledge and we search for the truth from God's word.

John 6:52-56 **The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.**

The Jews disputed among themselves concerning these words from Jesus. They did not argue with Jesus but among themselves. How can it be that Jesus gives us his flesh to eat? The Greek text indicates they had a serious conflict among themselves concerning these words. They were fighting about the meaning of Jesus' words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. The Lord heard their arguments, but he did not answer the "how" question. Our Lord was not as concerned with "how" he can give them flesh. His answer says that they need to eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to have life.

The flesh of Jesus was broken on the cross and his blood was poured out. In the cross of Jesus Christ we have healing, forgiveness and life. Our reading from John's gospel says that Jesus requires us to eat and drink if we are to be part of him. Jesus says that if we are to have life we must eat his flesh and drink his blood. You and I might compare this to participating in the Lord's Supper. We come to the Lord's Table believing that we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ but Jesus is also talking about sharing in his crucifixion so that we might also share in his life. We believe that every time we come to the table we receive something special. Jesus said that we eat his body and drink his blood and we have forgiveness of sins. We receive knowledge of God's love and salvation. We believe that eating the bread from heaven and drinking his blood allows us live in the Lord and he lives in us.

We come to the table because our Lord taught that eating and drinking give us life. As we receive bread and wine we also receive the body and blood of our Lord. Receiving his body and blood means we also receive his life within us. Martin Luther had specific ideas about the Lord's Supper and when it should be celebrated. Luther said that we must desire to receive the sacrament and receive it often. Anyone that does not have the desire also does not desire to have the life the Lord gives. Luther says that we receive body and blood by faith. We come to the table believing the promises of our Lord. The Lord promises life for all that believe and eat his body and drink his blood. This food and this drink nourish us and allow faith to grow. It gives us the assurance that we are saved by grace through faith.

The Jews had a difficult time receiving this message from Jesus. They were fed with loaves and fish but they could not feed on the living bread. They could not accept the teaching that Jesus is life, that his body and blood are necessary for the life of the people. You and I must listen to the word of the Lord. We must hear that the Lord desires to give you life and health and peace. Jesus is the bread of life that came from heaven. Let us eat this bread always. AMEN