

**John 6:51-58 Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”**

**<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”**

**<sup>53</sup> 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. <sup>54</sup>**

**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Come and Eat! I always liked hearing my dad yell that when I was a kid. It meant supper was ready. It was followed immediately with the sound of footsteps clambering down the stairs and into the dining room. We were hungry. We loved to hear him say, Come and Eat. Unless of course mom had made liver!

Come and eat! Jesus doesn't say those exact words, but throughout this section over the last few weeks, the call has been there, to “Come and eat.” But what does he mean?

What does he mean when he says we must “eat his flesh?” He isn't talking about communion since he didn't institute the Lord's Supper until the night before his death. He's painting a picture, as he often does. He's tying the spiritual with something physical. He had just fed the 5000 people in a miraculous way. They were blown away and wanted more, more earthly bread. It was important to them. What's more important than food? It's top on the list. Without it we die.

By saying, “You must eat of this bread, the living bread, me,” Jesus was saying “Make me, and what I have come to do for your salvation the most important thing in your life, even above your food. Inwardly digest me and all I've come to do.”

When we're hungry, and smell food, or when someone says come and eat, our mouths begin to water. We seem to grow even hungrier. We go and we fill up. Does your mouth water for this food? Does your soul long to be filled with Jesus and God's Word describing all he's done for our salvation?

Not always. Like the Jews arguing about “how could Jesus give his flesh to eat,” there is a sharp argument going on within us, within our sinful nature. It cannot believe a word of what this book says. Not just about Jesus being bread to eat, but all that it says. From creation to salvation and everything in between, like the Trinity and rising from the dead, how can it be? It's unbelievable.

It's unbelievable because of our sinfulness. Dead, blind, enemies of God by nature we don't believe anything that God says. We run the other way. We, like the Jews, argue sharply against it all. “Come and eat,” Jesus said. And yet, on our own, we can't. On our own we push it away.

But here we are. Not to our own credit. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Corinthians, “**No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.**” The Holy Spirit has enabled and empowered us to believe what to the rest of the world seems unbelievable. We understand what Jesus is talking about here. That this man who lived 2000 years ago still is relevant in our lives today — more relevant than anything else. Yes, at times, we are pulled to the other breads of this world, the bread of materialism, the bread of worldly success. The bread of pleasure and treasure, the bread of ME! The bread of death. And on our own we'd be stuck there. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are drawn back to the bread of life, Jesus our Savior. He has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with his gifts, sanctified and keeps us in the true faith. It is by the Holy Spirit's power that we hear and heed the call of our Savior, “Come and eat!”

Maybe we aren't always feeling so hungry, though. My first couple of weeks as a pastor in Houston, I was invited over on a Saturday to my associate pastor's house for dinner. But during the day I had been out exploring the many things to see in Houston and I had a really big and kind of late lunch. The food was amazing. I was so full, and had only a

couple hours before I was supposed to be at dinner where supper was prepared and I was expected to eat. I didn't know what I was going to do. When I got there, the pastor's wife had made soup - 3 different kinds. And it was the best soup I've ever had. As full as I was, I had 3 helpings.

“Come and eat,” Jesus says to us, and yet we aren't always feeling so hungry. Sometimes we just feel so full of church and God's Word, or we're filled up on the things of this world. But to pass on this meal means missing out on eternal blessings. Just look what he has prepared.

He said, “This bread is my flesh, given for the life of the world.” Our sins deserve for each of us eternal death in hell. But Jesus paid the price of our sins when he died on the cross. And Jesus makes it clear that without him, without this bread of life, we have no life. We're on our own to suffer punishment for our sins. Eternal death in hell, or, the price of our sins paid for by his death on the cross. How could we push that away and say we're too full?

And, with this bread of life, we remain in him, and he in us. He's taken care of our greatest need, our greatest fear - eternal death in hell. But what about all the needs and fears leading up to that? Here we see the bread of life meets those needs and drives away those fears too. We remain in him and he in us. No matter what the devil, the world, or even our own sinful flesh say otherwise. How could we push that away and say we're too full?

“Come and eat,” Jesus says. Even when we feel we've had our fill, especially when we find we've filled up too much on the things of this world. Here we find a meal so important, Jesus say we can't live without it. In Jesus we have forgiveness for all our sins. Even for the times in the past that we have pushed our Savior away. Even for the times we have filled up too much on things of lesser importance than Christ. Here we have a meal that doesn't just sustain our life, but gives us new life. With all our sins removed and Jesus' perfect life given in their place, we have a life where we are already right with God for Jesus sake. A life where serving him isn't a chore. A life without the “you must do it or else” kind of pressure. A life where we are already perfect in God's sight. A life

where we are free and motivated to live up to how God already sees us. How could we ever push that away and say we're too full?

But far and away the greatest blessing is a product of the first two. With all our sins forgiven, with Jesus perfect life as our own before God, eternal life in heaven is guaranteed. Jesus said it himself. When the Jews compared Jesus to the bread from heaven in the Old Testament, Jesus pointed out to them that they ate that bread, yet they still died. And then he said, “**but he who feeds on this bread** (meaning himself) **will live forever.**”

Come and eat, My father use to say. And we always love hearing that, unless mom had made something we didn't like, which was rare. But when Jesus calls us to come and eat, we never have to worry that we won't like what is placed before us. Come and eat! The Spirit's power has enabled us to believe and trust what God's Word says. Come and eat. Look what has been prepared - The forgiveness for all our sins, full and free. Come and eat. look what it does — Life forever in heaven. Come and eat. As often as we can. Come and eat of the living bread from heaven, Jesus our Savior. Amen.