

**“Nourished For Life”**  
**By Rev. Frances Savill**  
**Sunday August 18, 2024**

**John 6:48-69**

“I’m telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life; eternal life. I am the Bread of Life – the living Bread! – who came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this Bread will live – forever! The Bread that I present to the world so that it can eat and live is myself, this flesh and blood self.”

The people balked at Jesus’ words, but he continued.

“Only insofar as you eat and drink flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, do you have life within you. The one who brings a hearty appetite to this eating and drinking has eternal life and will be fit and ready for the Final Day. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me. This is the Bread from Heaven. Whoever eats this Bread will live always.” (John 6 from The Message)

John Calvin, in his Institutes of the Christian Religion wrote about communion saying: *“The knowledge of this high mystery is very necessary, and in view of its very greatness it demands a careful explanation.”* (Bk 4.17.1)

This is a very great subject and does demand careful explanation, more than one sermon can give, but I will attempt this morning to give a partial understanding, and time for all of us to reflect on this high mystery.

John Calvin, begins his section on the Sacred Supper of Christ saying:

*God has received us, once for all, into his family, to hold us not only as servants but as sons (and daughters). Thereafter, to fulfill the duties of a most excellent Father concerned for his children, he undertakes to nourish us throughout the course of our life. To this end, therefore, he has, through the hand of his only-begotten Son, given to us his church another sacrament, that is, a spiritual banquet, **wherein Christ proves himself to be the life-giving bread**, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality.”* (Bk 4.17.1)

Jesus himself says that he is the Living Bread!  
And anyone who eats this Bread will live –  
forever.

This sacrament is given to feed us, to nourish us  
for life.

It is one of God's good gifts given to us.

The passage from John's gospel that we are  
basing our reflections on, is part of a larger  
passage where there's a lot of talk about bread.  
The beginning is the feeding of the 5000 men  
plus the women and children.

Jesus has given them a meal – he gave them  
bread to eat- and the people want more – but  
Jesus is trying to tell them that something much  
more significant is being offered here.

He's isn't just a meal ticket, and this isn't about a  
free lunch – there is bread being offered that has  
come down from heaven – living bread – bread  
that will give eternal life.

Bread is not the staple food of every culture, but  
it was one of the basics of daily life in Jesus' day.  
Jesus and those around him ate bread like some  
people eat rice – or others eat potatoes – there

wasn't a day without it – it was one of the essentials of their diet.

My grandfather would reportedly say, and on occasion my father would say; “I thought you said dinner was ready, where are the potatoes.”

For the people in Jesus' day, the meal wouldn't be ready without bread.

So when Jesus says he is the Bread of Life, he isn't one of the optional side dishes and isn't just for special occasions – he is daily food, constant nutrition, the stuff of life that gives you strength and is essential to every meal.

Wine, in Jesus' day was again the drink of every day – wine nourishes and refreshes, strengthens and gladdens.

So it is with Christ, as we come to Him in prayer and worship, as we come to His words and his example, as we learn the way of Jesus, as we share food whether in the foyer following worship, or at our Lord's table, we are fed the bread of life.

Our souls are nourished, our faith is fed and strengthened as we come hungry for God's word,

thirsting to follow Jesus and be in communion with Him in prayer, or doing his will on land so it start to looks like God's kingdom.

Jesus tells us that we must eat and drink his flesh and blood – the people in Jesus' day found these words upsetting and confusing, and I think there continue to be people who are not sure what Jesus meant by these words.

And certainly all Christians do not agree what these words mean.

In the midst of the Passover celebration, Jesus took break and broke it and gave it to them saying; take and eat, this is my body. (Matt 26:25ff The Message)

And he took a cup of wine that was on the table, that was part of the Passover feast and he said; "Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, God's new covenant poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins."

And the question is raised in what way are we eating and drinking Christ's body and blood. And maybe the more important question should be around Jesus' statement that in this eating and drinking we are joined to him and made one with him as he is one with his Father.

How is that so? How are we joined to Christ as we come to His table?

And how does he feed us that we might have *real* life, *eternal* life, life now and always.

The first question – in what way are we eating and drinking Christ’s body and blood is answered differently by different churches.

The Presbyterian Church generally holds that the Holy Spirit makes effective the signs we are given.

We take common elements – bread and unfermented wine (grape juice), and we believe and experience that Christ is present through the power the Holy Spirit.

We take part in Christ’s life, death and resurrection in our eating and drinking.

There are visible, physical signs of bread and wine that we eat and drink, and smell, and feel and taste, and spiritual truth, which teaches us that Jesus makes himself present through the power of the Holy Spirit- and gives himself to us.

His flesh, and his blood, is given to us in the gifts of bread and wine.

In taking part in this meal we are joined to that Passover night when Jesus met in the upper room with his disciples, we become part of the large story of salvation.

Jesus' blood that was poured out on the cross cleanses us, and Jesus' words "this is my body broken for *you*" are spoken to us.

"This is the wonderful exchange," says Calvin, "out of Jesus' measureless goodness, he has made with us; that in becoming Son of man, flesh and blood with us, Jesus has made us sons and daughters of God with him; by Jesus' descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; by taking on our mortality, Jesus has given his immortality to us, in accepting our weakness, Jesus has strengthened us by his power; in receiving our poverty to himself, he has transferred his wealth to us, and taking the weight of our sin upon himself, he has clothed us with his righteousness." (Bk 4.17.2)

All of this is received as we feast at His banquet table.

In sharing in Jesus' body and blood, through the bread and wine, we share in his death on the cross.

We share in Jesus' resurrection, and death can hold him no more, so neither can death hold us.

And Jesus' promise is that in receiving his gifts in sharing his body and blood at the table, we are joined as one with him, and so one with one another.

His life becomes our life – *real life, life eternal*.

We do not celebrate communion every day, but we can feed on Christ daily – be in communion with him, to be nourished in this life, and then we join together in a special way at our Lord's table- to share the feast which he has prepared.

Thanks be to God!