

Jesus Compares Himself with Food John 6:22-71

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

After Jesus had miraculously fed five thousand people, He sent the multitudes back to their homes in the evening. That night was when He walked on water and rescued His disciples as they all journeyed to the other side of the lake. The next morning, the same crowds Jesus had fed searched for and found Him. Unfortunately, they were not motivated by their hunger for spiritual truth; rather, they were hoping for some more free food.

This greatly disappointed Jesus, so He exhorted them to seek not for what temporarily sustains physical life, but for what was vastly more important, the eternal life that only He could give them. One reason Jesus had supernaturally provided physical food was because He was hoping the people would see Him as their source for true spiritual food.

Jesus then explained that God's spiritual food is far superior to any physical food. All that physical food can do is keep a person's body alive, and it can only do it for a limited amount of time because everyone eventually dies. The spiritual food that God is offering, however, gives life to our spirits, the part of us that the Bible calls the "inward person." That inward person will live forever, but unless he eats some of God's spiritual food, he will be forever sinful and destined to spend eternity in hell. But if he eats God's spiritual food, he will be reborn and spend eternity in heaven.

Not only that, but God's spiritual food will one day affect his physical body as well. On the last day, God will resurrect everyone's body who has believed in Jesus, making them into "glorified bodies" that will never become sick, grow old or die! What physical food can't keep alive for more than a few decades, God's spiritual food will resurrect and keep alive forever! That's why Jesus said that when we eat God's spiritual food, we will never hunger or thirst again. He meant that His gift of eternal life, once received, was sufficient for all eternity. It's not something that needs constant replenishing. One meal is good forever!

God wants everyone to eat His spiritual food, and Jesus told the people that they could eat by simply believing in Him. They, however, were still much more interested in physical food, and, hoped that He would again provide free bread. They requested a sign that would convince them to believe in Him. Because it was food they were after, they mentioned how Moses had miraculously provided bread for the people of Israel, the manna they gathered each morning from the ground.

Jesus explained that it wasn't Moses who provided the bread, it was God. Now the same God was offering everyone "true bread," the spiritual food that could give them eternal life. Jesus then stated that He was God's true bread sent from heaven, indicating that what people really needed was for Him to come inside their spirits.

But His audience began to murmur over what He said. They knew He had been born like any other person, so how could He claim to have come from heaven? They didn't know, of course, that Joseph wasn't actually Jesus' father, and that Jesus had come from heaven via Mary's womb.

Finally, continuing to expand on His comparison of Himself to food, Jesus revealed what would uniquely qualify Him to offer eternal life to the world, and what people must believe in order to receive the eternal life He offered: He would die, offering Himself as a sacrifice so others could have eternal life. Jesus said, "This bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live....I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. But those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them at the last day. For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink" (John 6:51, 53-55).

Of course, no one can, and neither does Jesus want anyone to actually eat His flesh and drink His blood. But Jesus wants us to receive Him into our spirits, just as we receive physical food into our bodies. And He wants us to believe that He died for us, pouring out His blood and giving His body so we can have eternal life. In Jesus' comparison, eating represents receiving and believing. Eating Jesus, God's true bread, means believing in Him. It means becoming one with Him, just as Jesus said, "All who eat my flesh and drink my blood remain in me, and I in them" (John 6:56).

Many people who were listening that day didn't like what they heard. They took what Jesus said literally, not figuratively as He intended, and just as any sincere person would have taken Him. They really didn't want to understand because they didn't want to believe what He was saying about Himself. So they left Him. But Peter, a sincere believer, confessed that he believed Jesus alone had the words of eternal life and that He was "the Holy One of God" (John 6:69), the Messiah. Even if he didn't fully understand all Jesus said, he and the rest

would be staying with Jesus, as all true believers would.

Q. Jesus said that people can't come to Him unless they are drawn by the Father. Does this mean that God is only drawing certain people to Jesus?

A. No. Jesus said that if He was lifted up on the cross, that He would draw everyone to Himself (see John 12:32). So Jesus is drawing everyone, but unless He and His Father drew people, none would come to Him, because all are so blinded by sin and hard-hearted.

Q. Did you see any correlation with what we read today and the church's practice of taking communion?

A. When we eat the bread and drink the grape juice, it represents eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood. That sounds like Christians are cannibals! However, we're not! I hope you realize now that partaking of the communion elements represents our becoming one with Jesus and reminds us of His substitutionary death for us. Just as the bread and grape juice go into our stomachs and then nourish every cell in our bodies, so Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, has come into our spirits and given us eternal life. Just as we become "one" with the bread and grape juice, so we've become one with Jesus. He's in us and we're in Him. That's why it's called communion, because what we do symbolizes our communion with Jesus (and each other). Also, communion reminds us that our oneness with Jesus was made possible by His sacrificial death, when His body was broken (like the bread is broken) and His blood was shed, represented by the grape juice.

Application: Some of what we read today was difficult to understand, just as Jesus' disciples expressed to Him. However, we have a good idea of what Jesus meant in general. And, like Peter, even if we don't fully understand everything Jesus said, we know He's the only One who has the words of eternal life. So we'll keep right on following Him! Someday we will understand what we don't understand now.