

John 6:35-51

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our text today is a continuation of last week's Gospel, "Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of

this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The prophet Isaiah spoke of our Lord in his writing as the suffering servant. Jesus is the servant of God through whom God will restore his people. The role of the servant is to carry out the righteous and holy will of God. In our text today, we see the fulfillment of this very thought. In the opening part of this text today, Jesus says to the crowd gathered there, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Jesus did not come to do his own will. He was no rogue teacher running around the countryside of Judea teaching some

radical version of the faith that was entirely his own. This is significant because it colors the way that we view the work of Christ. He did not feed the 5,000 simply because he wanted to see if he could do it. He didn't walk on water, feed the sick, or cast out demons as an idle display of his power or authority. He did them because his Father sent him to do those very things. Jesus' ministry is him submitting to and fulfilling the will of God, even to the point of death upon the cross so that we would have life.

This life that Christ gives to his people is no small thing. It is not just a life that we have now. Far too many people in our world, even those who are Christians believe that the purpose of our lives is to simply enjoy ourselves and live for today. God exists to simply support us in the endeavor of our own happiness. That makes enjoyment the highest good in our lives.

In this way, enjoyment and entertainment can become an idol for us.

The amount of money and time that we sink into things that have no real lasting value is staggering. We spend countless hours numbly staring at screens or arguing with strangers on the internet. We seek to escape the reality around us by means of games and diversions of every kind. And then we dare think that this is the life that Christ had in mind for us as he suffered on the cross! That we ought to just be doing whatever we can to get through each day because there is yet another day coming that we must wearily trudge through.

Dear friends, that is not the gift of life that Christ has given to you! The will of God is not for you to live a life trapped inside of a digital bubble disconnected from those around you! The will of God is not for you to be isolated and separated from your brothers and sisters in Christ simply because it is easy and

convenient to do so! The will of God is that everyone who looks on the Son of Man should have eternal life and be raised up on the Last Day.

We as God's people live our lives with one eye on the horizon. We do, of course, find ourselves here and now, which is where God has given us to live. It is good and right for us to enjoy those things that are good, but we ought not ever think that this is the highest good available to us. To find the higher good, we look to the horizon. We, like every generation of Christian before us, live in the reality that what we have now from God is only a small taste of what is to come.

Truly, Jesus is here in our text speaking clearly of the Last Day and the resurrection of the dead. He is speaking of the life that he gives to all people who trust in him. A life that is eternal. Through faith in Christ, we have a life that is eternal now.

Though we may still yet taste death one day, it will not be the

end. We will continue to live. All of those distractions and temporary things that we allowed to dominate our lives will be gone. We will be with our Lord Jesus in heaven as we await the day of the resurrection of all flesh. We will be there with our Lord as we are raised in new, perfected bodies that will be ours for the rest of eternity.

What a wonderful promise and hope! What a wonderful thing for us to look forward to. But how do we receive this eternity? How do we receive this life? By the simple act of eating. We are currently seeing a resurgence of people wanting to treat various illnesses and diseases holistically, by what we eat. I know that this is something that many of you subscribe to. This is not a bad thing as it allows us to use those gifts that God has given us. However, those things that we eat can offer us little more than a few more hours, days, or years to our lives. We

may eat a good, nutritious, and delicious meal today. But we will need to eat again tomorrow.

And we all know what would happen should we stop eating. If we should stop feeding our bodies the things that are necessary for this life, we would die. How much more then ought we rejoice that our God has given us a meal that we eat for the benefit of eternal life? Jesus is the bread that came down out of heaven for you and for me. The bread that the faithful servant of God gave for the life of the world was his very own flesh. And if we should reject and despise this and the other gifts of God, will not our spirits wither and die within us once again? Thanks be to God that he continues to come to us again and again, feeding and sustaining us.

Truly, Jesus gave this gift to us on the night when he instituted the Lord's Supper. And the promise of his blood being poured out for the forgiveness of our sins was fulfilled the very

next day. His body was given for us as it was nailed to the cross. Again, this was not because he desired it or because he thought it would just be a great day. He did it out of obedience to his Father and out of his endless, divine love for you and for me.

Because Jesus has given his flesh for the life of the world, he gave up his own life. He died being crucified, one of the most horrific ways that we as humans have ever devised to execute someone. And Jesus willingly suffered crucifixion and more for you and for your sake. He died that you and I would live. He has purchased you through his blood, which is why St. Paul says to Romans, “For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”

The life that you and I have is not ours to do with as we please. Our lives are not meant to be the vehicles for us to

distract ourselves until we die. Our lives are gifts given to us, won for us by the very blood of Christ that was shed on the cross to pay for our sins. This is what we have been given. Our lives, your life, has value unto itself because you belong to Christ.

Which of us, if we were given a gift of such incredible value that someone spent everything they had to procure it for us would simply throw it into a closet and forget about it? We would hold that gift to be a precious thing. We would admire and enjoy it every day of our lives.

How much more ought we then enjoy our lives and use them to praise and serve our Lord who has purchased us from the realm of death and the devil? Our lives are eternal. They are no fleeting thing that require us to live each day as if it were our last. We should live as though each day were our first, our first chance to show our love and appreciation to a God who loved us enough to redeem us with his own blood and flesh.

And we rejoice that each Lord's Day we are given the chance to come and gather together to hear the Word of the God who has redeemed us. We gather here not to show everyone else how good of Christians we are, but we are here humbly, gathered together as beggars with empty hands, outstretched for the gifts that God lovingly lavishes upon us through the Word and Sacraments. He forgives us of our sins, because the penalty has been borne by Christ. He gives us life and salvation because we get to hold in our hands the very bread that has come down from heaven, the body and blood of Christ. We receive this gift that Jesus only told the crowd about in our text today. We receive that which the crowd desired and hungered after. May God grant us such appreciation and hunger that we would come to receive this eagerly and with joy for the life that he gives to us and maintains in us. Amen.

Now, may the peace that surpasses all understanding keep
your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord to life
everlasting. Amen.