

Better Than Gran's Food

(John 6:51)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever"

Dear friends in Christ,

Some of your (Lutheran) ancestors emigrated from Germany back in the 1800s, whereas others came to Australia soon after WW2. Many post-war immigrants were displaced persons (like my parents and me) and had little more than a couple suitcases to their name. Their first home in Australia was in the Bonegilla Migrant Centre; they missed their families and friends; they told stories about the 'old country,' and they continued to eat traditional dishes they grew up with.

Now, I wonder if Adam and Eve ever yearned for the 'good old days' and 'old country'? Did they miss the delicious food and the contented life before it was all ruined? I wonder if they ever regretted the day they transgressed God's command – "***you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil***"? (Gen. 2:17). They might have, but they couldn't undo what had been done.

Do you miss the good old days when gran's food was the best, and you felt that life couldn't get any better? Now, what if you could go back in time and enjoy that life all over again? Impossible? Well, as I understand it, Jesus is inviting you to eat food that is far better than what your gran ever cooked! That's what Jesus tells the crowd the day after He fed the 5,000 – '***stop chasing after food that perishes for I have come to bring you better food.***'

Tell me, is this some fancy dish from My Kitchen Rules? No. Is it an exotic meal from a 5 star French restaurant? No. But Jesus claims it: "***I am the bread of life.***" And just as Adam and Eve's every need was satisfied by God, so Jesus will sustain you in body and soul to life eternal, for '***whoever comes to me I will never drive away***'.

But this promise isn't just to make life tolerable in this vale of tears – it's much more than that. Jesus promises to bring you home to Paradise!

In John's Gospel, Christ reminds us that **'my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'**(v40) Though God said to our first parents in Eden: **'If you eat of this [forbidden] tree you will surely die'** (Gen. 2:16), now Jesus tells us, **'if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever'**.

So, my friends, this is your invitation to eat the best food ever. To eat of the **Tree of Life** and live forever!

Indeed, this was also Jesus' invitation to the Jews. But 'the Jews began to grumble about him [saying] "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" (v41-42). Back in Jesus' day the Jews didn't believe; and the world still doesn't believe that our Lord could, and would restore eternal life.

The good news, my friends, is that He did. Yes, Jesus gave life to the world by taking our life-robbing Sin upon Himself so that, by killing Him the wages of sin would be paid in full. What this means is that at your baptism you were raised to new life with the victorious, risen Jesus.

Now, just as the people in Jesus' time didn't believe, so the devil tempts us with the 'fruit' we should never even consider tasting: the forbidden fruit. But many are tempted – including you and me! As a result we look for real life in the latest fads and promises. We look to ourselves and what we can do instead of where life can really be found – i.e. in Christ, the Bread of Life.

That's why Paul rebukes the Ephesian church when he writes: **'You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and they are separated from the life God gives because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.'** (v17,18) Indeed, the Ephesians were living and acting like everyone else in society – that is, like unbelievers!

Paul continues, and I paraphrase: You didn't come to know Christ that way, did you? Didn't I teach you that you died and rose with Jesus in baptism? That the Father made you His child at the font; and it's there that you receive forgiveness and new life? What's more, the reconciliation found in Jesus' words, 'This is my Body... This is my Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' isn't a licence to live as the godless do! Don't you remember? Jesus gave His life so you can have real life, here and in eternity.

Now, just as there was unbelief in Jesus' day, Satan continues to cast doubt in our hearts about the effectiveness of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in our lives. But, my friends, don't be fooled: the carpenter from Nazareth was more than just a mere mortal; and the sacraments are more than simple tap water, and ordinary bread and wine.

You see, God's Word and His promises given through His Son, makes them life-giving. They are the living bread you and I need to be sustained in body; to be refreshed in spirit; and to be strengthened in faith.

Today, my friends, Jesus the Son of God declares to you and me, "***I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever***". Back in the day your gran's cooking kept you going until you needed another meal. Today, however, your Lord and Saviour offers you real food that will sustain you to life eternal. This living bread will feed your soul and quench your thirst for Christ Jesus has done everything necessary to prepare a place for you in His Father's house. So come, eat, and live.
Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Ernie Kiss, 8 August 2021