

## ***THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST***

***John 6:51-58***

There's nothing like a good meal. When we are really hungry it is especially good. Another thing about a good meal is that it settles us down. When we get hungry, we get jittery and jumpy, but a good meal settles us down. We are more at peace and relaxed after a good meal. And of course a good meal gives us strength. Hunger can make us weak. But a good meal, not one full of empty calories, but a meal that is good for us, can give us strength. That is why nutritionists say that breakfast is so important. It gives us energy to get the day started right. Speaking of good meals, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

Now some of the people who heard Jesus say this thought He was crazy! And can you blame them? If someone came in here talking like that, we would think them crazy. "I am the bread from heaven. You must eat my body and drink my blood to be fed". It sounds like the ranting of someone having a mental breakdown.

Of course when we hear Jesus talking like this, we immediately think of the Last Supper. We think of Holy Communion and the bread and wine that represent Jesus giving his life for us. And that is right, but Jesus had not had the last supper yet when He said these things. We can't simply write this off as a reference to the Eucharist. Jesus is saying something here that has meaning apart from that reference.

Jesus is saying, "I am the main course". We all know that the

main course of the meal is that part that fills us up and nourishes us the most. The main course is the steak and potatoes, or the chicken and rice. The soup and salad of the appetizers are great, the desert after is wonderful, but the main course makes, or breaks, the meal.

Jesus is saying He is the meat and potatoes for our souls. Jesus is Soul Food. What came before was good. The law and the prophets provided some nourishment. The manna, the bread Moses served as appetizer, was fine. It was prepared by God after all. But Jesus is what really feeds us and gives us life.

Jesus is the main course. We sometimes lose sight of that fact.

There is so much to feed on in the church. There are Bible Studies and fellowship, activities and committee meetings, and all these things are good. But they are just the soup and salad.

They are the appetizers and the deserts. Jesus is the main course. It is He who gives us eternal life. By feeding on Him and taking Him into our hearts and lives, we receive life. We can feed on the appetizers and not die, but we will always be under nourished. So we need to remember that Jesus is the main course.

According to legend there was once a king who loved his wife more than life itself. But she died in child birth. Since he was a king, he ordered a great memorial and mausoleum be built for his wife. Thousands of workers toiled for seventeen years. The king dedicated himself to making sure the task was done well.

One day near the end of construction, a box was found among the construction rubble. They were about to send it off with the garbage, when it was discovered that it was the coffin of his wife. He had become so obsessed with the building of the memorial, that he forgot it was meant to be a memorial for his wife, and a final resting place for her body. According to

legend, that memorial is known today as the Taj Mahal.

We, too, need to be careful, that in the business of our church life, we don't forget that Jesus is the reason for it all, that He is the main course. Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven". We know bread was the main staple of people's diets back then, people received most of their nourishment from bread. But to be nourished by bread, we have to eat it. We have to take it into ourselves.

That is the way it is with Jesus. We have to take Him in. We have to accept Him and ask Him into our hearts. We have to let Him become part of us. Too often people try to keep Him at arms length. For them Jesus is someone, or something, outside of them. But we have to let Him in, then He can nourish us.

Then He can give life to our heart and soul.

Jesus is the main course, and this main course involves a sacrifice. Jesus said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life". Now if Jesus had just wanted to talk about accepting Him as spiritual nourishment, He could have just talked about bread. But He also talks about blood. He is obviously talking about His death on the cross. By His death, Jesus fed us. His death defeated sin, and because sin is defeated, we have forgiveness and eternal life. For that to happen, a sacrifice has to be made.

We modern people are out of touch with what goes into preparing our food. We forget that the fried chicken on our tables was once a live animal, and it had to be killed to make our dinner possible. There is an old church cookbook that has a recipe for fried chicken. The first line of the recipe says, "The day before, pick out chicken". Imagine, a woman in an apron looking out the back door at a bunch of live chickens, and picking one out to kill and cook. In the same book there is a

recipe for venison stew. The first step in the directions was “kill a deer”. That main course required a sacrifice too.

Jesus’ blood had to be shed. He had to die so that we could be fed. Eternal life is a free gift for us, but it cost Jesus His life!

Jesus is the main course. Jesus is the only soul food that can give eternal life. To be truly filled and never hunger again, we have to feed on Jesus, keep Him at the center of our life.

Jesus said: “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever”. Jesus is the bread of life.

He died to feed us and give us eternal life, feed on Him in prayer, in reading and studying the Bible, and in service to others.

**AMEN.**