

Lectionary B August 16, 2015, Pentecost 12  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church  
Evansville, IN 47541  
Roberta Meyer

Proverbs 9:1-6  
Psalm 34:9-14  
Ephesians 5:15-20  
John 6:51-58

### **You Are What You Eat**

What's your favorite food?—Corn on the Cob, I really like a good tender ear of corn, freshly cooked and doused with butter with pepper, mainly pepper and a little salt. I chomp into that ear of corn and feel the little juicy kernels burst in my mouth as I chew them up. And when there is no more corn on that ear, I can't stop. I suck the juicy remnants from that ear. Pretty wonderful. I can't seem to get enough. When it is corn season, we have been known to make a meal from just corn.

This is the kind of eating Jesus is talking about in our gospel lesson. He is talking about chomping and chewing, devouring, digesting the Living Bread. "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever...*" Now we are so used to hearing about Jesus' body and blood when we come to the Communion Meal, that I don't think we really hear what Jesus is saying in this text. We just jump to "Oh, Jesus is talking about communion here", and we don't, should I say, digest what he is saying here.

One pastor told a story about one day when he was serving communion at his church: *The communion table was draped, as always, in starched linen and set with silver chalices and plates. The congregation was silent, even somber, as he began carefully to read the words of institution in a solemn tone meant to add dignity to the proceedings. And "On [this] occasion," he writes, "when I repeated Jesus' familiar words, 'This is my body, broken for you; this is my blood, shed for you' a small girl suddenly said in a loud voice, 'Ew, yuk!' The congregation looked horrified," he continues, "as if someone had splattered blood all over the altar — which is pretty much what that little girl did.*

Listen to what Jesus says. "...*the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*" The Greek word he uses here for the word eat, literally means chomp, chew up, swallow and digest. Jesus is talking about us diving into his flesh the way I did that ear of corn, sucking in all the juices left on the bones.

Ew, yuck! Right. No wonder the Jews reacted the way they did. "*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*"

What's going on here? Jesus is in our faces with the fact that he is God through and through and he is human through and through. Jesus came down as a flesh and blood human person. In the words of Jesus' day, saying one gives one's flesh and blood, means one gives one's whole body. Jesus' whole body is given to us so we can live forever.

We've talking about bread, or the "bread of life" for the last three weeks. And now, in the fourth week, we finally get to the crux of it all. These verses tell us just what is at stake for Jesus, just how much we are worth to him. In these verses, he offers to us his very own flesh and blood, the flesh which will be stretched upon the cross for our sake, the blood which will flow freely from his hands, feet, and side, also for our sake.

For three weeks we have read, studied, and struggled to understand what Jesus means by speaking of the bread of life and the food from heaven. Here, now, in this fourth week he makes himself far too clear. In this passage, Jesus gets plain gross, to make sure we get it. He's not a personified spirit. He is the God who becomes meaty, senewy, flesh. And why? So we can one day be like God. That's how much he loves us.

Jesus is offering his whole body for us so that we can have an intimate relationship with him. This is how it works. When we receive Jesus, the whole Jesus, in the sacraments, when we eat his flesh and drink his blood, his life clings to our bones and flows through our veins. He cannot be taken from our lives any more than our favorite foods, like my corn on the cob, can be removed from our bodies." Jesus puts a profound meaning to the saying, "You are what you eat." In these passages Jesus is telling us he came to be so close to us, he becomes part of us.

So the question I asked this week in my email was:

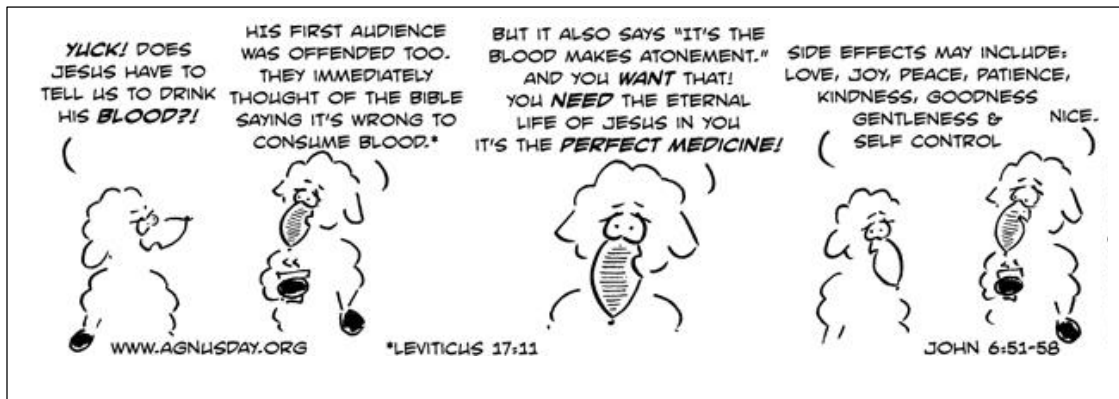
*Could Jesus really mean this -- that the life and presence he bears should stick in our bellies, course through our bodies, and shape who and what we are? How does this influence how we think of Holy Communion?*

We spend a lot of time, research and money on food. Food that is healthy, food that tastes good, food that strengthens us so we can live healthy whole lives. Nutrition is a big thing. Well, what better food could we give our bodies than Jesus. Feasting on Jesus means Jesus becomes part of our flesh and we become part of Jesus' flesh. That is the nitty gritty meaning of Jesus words, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them."

So how does this influence how we think of Holy Communion? Well, think about it. If Jesus is flowing through our bodies the more we eat of this meal the more Jesus is in us. And how does that change us?

We are what we eat—remember? When we feed on Jesus each week, then we are ready to go be Jesus during the week. We are nourished to reach out to Jesus' hungry flock and feed them this living bread. We are fed with the food that gives everlasting life and we are sent to bring this gift to all God's children.

Look at this little cartoon of these two sheep.



That is why the Lord's Supper is so important. Look at it's side effects!

We are called to the table to feast of Jesus. That is the only food that lasts forever.

In the words of St. Augustine I invite you today to

*"Come to the table to receive what you are. Then go into the world to be what you have received."* Let me repeat that.

*"Come to the table to receive what you are. Then go into the world to be what you have received."* Amen