

## ***You are What You Eat***

Scriptures: Psalm 84, John 6:53-69 (Ord. 21B)

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Recently I heard someone quip that if you are what you eat, most Americans are fast, easy, and cheap.

Jesus offers us a contrast- a life lived through him. Jesus is the bread of life and the source of an abundant life.

Jesus tells his disciples that through the power of his Father, the one who sent him, to reveal God to us, he is the bread of life. Then he instructs, "those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them."

Jesus gets graphic. He says you are what you eat then goes on to say feed on me. Eat my flesh, drink my blood. And the disciples say what so many of us are thinking, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" or as another translation says, this is a HARD word- hard to swallow, hard to believe, hard to live. Today's passage is a HARD and difficult word.

The entire Chapter 6 of the gospel of John leads us to this point. The disciples and the crowds have witnessed the feeding of the 5000. They have seen signs of healing. All these signs are given so that they and we might trust that Jesus is the Son of God.

Will you not only believe in Jesus, but place your very life in his hands? Will you consume Jesus to the point where you become recreated more and more into his image and into his purposes for your life? These are hard words. No wonder the disciples are complaining. "Does this offend you?" Jesus asks them.

Jesus is always offending someone. He rewrites the rules. He includes people in God's circle of grace as children of God: the unclean, the greedy tax collector, the sexually impure person, the sick believed to be imperfect due to sin.

Jesus offends even us sometimes.

## MONEY

Some say if you want to offend people, talk about politics, religion, and money. Jesus speaks more about money than marriage, divorce, sex...the things that we seem to talk about most in our public discourse. Jesus says if you wish your life to be full, chew on this. I am the bread of life, not those things that you think sustain you. Follow me. Take me into your very being, and I will be the source of all that you think, say and do. Jesus wants all of us, body, mind, spirit...even our money. Perhaps Jesus talks about money because how we use money shows in what or in whom we trust.

Have you noticed how we talk about money? Dough, bread...

The 1920s and 1930s were particularly rich in American slang terms for money, some of which are still in use today. Some terms referred to money's use in purchasing food: **bacon** (as in bring home), **bread**, **dough**, and so on. (One term for counterfeit money was **sourdough**.) Other terms referred to the green color of American bills: **cabbage**, **lettuce**. We eat collard greens on New Years to signify money and a prosperous year ahead.

We hear it today in popular slang...these are the words to a popular song *Glamorous* by Fergie that says something about our desire for wealth.

*I'm talking Champagne wishes, caviar dreams  
You deserve nothing but all the finer things  
Now this whole world has no clue what to do with us  
I've got enough money in the bank for the two of us  
Plus I gotta keep enough **lettuce to support your shoe fetish**  
Lifestyles so rich and famous  
Robin Leach will get jealous*

From the song *Glamorous* by Fergie, Ludicris rapping

Maybe Jesus spoke of money so much because so many conflicts in life have to do with money. Most marital stress has something to do with money. Usually the number one cause of marital discord is poor communication, and people have a hard time discussing money. "This is a hard word." Once thought to be the top reason for divorce,

the economic downturn shows that divorce rates are dropping, but financial stresses are increasing. As many who are financially insecure have told me, I cannot afford to divorce. But their homes, children and lives are miserable.

(<http://www.aaml.org/go/library/publications/making-marriage-last/> American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers)

Discussing money in healthy ways in your family, teaches children to do so. The teaching method we use with our children is the Share, Save, Spend approach. We did not come up with that. And believe me like with the disciples, this is a difficult and hard word for them. The approach is promoted by many secular and Christian gurus. In a world of spend, spend, spend, Save share, spend is radical. Talking about money with kids will help them to be prepared to be good stewards of financial resources- resources that come from God and belong to God. We put "In God we trust" on our money and tell God with our stewardship, "in money we trust."

Listen to this statistics:

***Average credit card debt per U.S. household is more than \$9,300 —***  
Business Week

***More than 40 percent of employees say that stress over personal finances negatively impacts their productivity at work —*** Garman, Leach & Grable

***Young adults ages 25-34 carry an average of \$5,200 in credit card debt —***  
Business Week

***The after-tax savings rate for young people 35 and under is negative 16%***  
— Bureau of Labor Statistics

***Children today spend FIVE times more money than their parents did at the same age (and that's adjusted for inflation) —*** KGA Communications

***Young people 18 and under will spend and influence the spending of more than \$1 trillion dollars this year.*** (<http://www.sharesavespend.com/>)

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**This particularly hits home with college students: Listen to this:**

**19% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 declared bankruptcy in 2001.** (USA Today, 2001)

**The fastest growing group of bankruptcy filers are those people who are 25 years of age or younger.** (Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, 2002)

**Over 80% of undergraduates have at least one credit card and nearly 50% of college graduates carry 4 or more credit cards. According to the Department of Education, the average balance carried by these students is more than \$3,000.** (Senator Chris Dodd, CT)  
(from [www.daveramsey.com/etc/cms/index.cfm?intContentID=3891](http://www.daveramsey.com/etc/cms/index.cfm?intContentID=3891))

(Other resources which help teach children to do these three: <http://www.moonjar.com/>)

Why are you talking about money, preacher? Jesus comes saying place your trust in me. Consume me. Abide in me which means live through me. All of us use money to live. Jesus must shape our attitudes toward and use of money. Jesus tells us that he and the Father are the source of our lives.

## **COMMUNION**

When we commune here at Jesus' table, we literally commune with God and one another. We come to the source of our lives. By taking Jesus' body in the bread and drinking his blood in the cup, we are claiming that Jesus is Lord of our lives, our homes, our money, our politics, our relationships near and far.

Communion for me growing up was most like a memorial service every time....

...proper

decent and in order

Neat trays of perfectly cubed white bread

neat glasses of Mogan David wine

a funeral dirge playing on the organ.

There is something right about that. The Lord's Supper means that we participate in Jesus' death. We let go of our fears. We die to ourselves. We proclaim a cross and Jesus crucified. But it also means that we participate in his life and resurrection.... "The joyful feast of the people of God" as we ministers say. We go to places of

death and desperation, and we share a word or an act that gives life and meaning, purpose and hope again.

We feast on Jesus in worshiping him and taking part in the sacraments. We grow in wisdom by studying God's Word and by serving in mission. Through mission we go to the places where we might meet Jesus...bodily, in the flesh... *Our Daily Bread* food bank...or the new shelter for women, children and men, *Our Daily Rest*. We walk down the hall of our dorm to the guy or girl who seems so lonely. We listen to the voices of men women and children suffering from war, tyranny, and poor economics.

We meet Jesus in the flesh. We take up a cross, and we follow where Jesus would go.

When I picture the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I cannot help but think Sue Horton taking communion by *intinction*. *Intinction* is the word we preacher types use for when we all come forward to take a piece of bread and to dip it in the cup, "rip and dip" some say.

I remember Sue in her 80s coming forward on her walker determined to meet Jesus. She has lived her life that way. She is a child of Jesus' church and has served Him beside her Presbyterian Minister and Presbytery Executive husband, Tom, whom she has been married to for nearly 50 years. When Sue came down front to the table to me, I gave her a small piece of bread. While dipping it in the cup, she lost it. She went fishing for bread. I was frantically trying to give her another piece while she was fishing. Finally, she took another piece, dipped it. The juice dripped down her chin. We smiled at each other. "Sue, this is the body of Christ broken for you. His blood shed for you." Sue knew that following Jesus, the bread of life, was a messy endeavor. Not neat and simple, perfectly cubed and cleanly poured. She had lived life long enough following him to not care to be covered by his body and blood.

Her life has been covered by His body and blood.

Jesus said, eat my flesh and drink my blood. The Greek word for eat here means "gnaw." Jesus says dig in, gnaw on me. Drink deeply of my blood. Abide in me and let me be the source of your life. It is messy, but oh so satisfying when we swallow nothing less than the

flesh and blood of Christ himself. We become more like Christ. After all, you are what you eat. We come to this table again in a couple of Sundays, but we come to worship and feast on God each week.

What is God calling us to do? How are we Jesus' hands and his feet, the Body of Christ, here so that others may confess with Peter, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words to eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

John 6:68-69

Imagine what might happen if his blood washed away all of your fears, if you drank his love without reserve, if you left church with juice dripping down your front and a piece of Jesus stuck between your teeth. (adapted from Matt Fitzgerald, CC, Living by the Word, August 11, 2009)

Let us pray a prayer written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in 1549:

*We offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.*

**So, go into the world in peace,  
be of good courage,  
hold fast to that which is good,  
render to no-one evil for evil,  
strengthen the faint-hearted,  
support the weak,  
help the afflicted,  
honor all people;  
love and serve the Lord rejoicing in the power of  
the Holy Spirit,  
and may God bless you and strengthen you in all  
you do.**