

Midweek Lenten Vespers 4
St. John 6:36-51
March 14th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I AM the Bread of Life

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

One thing is clear from the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. John: our Lord + Jesus Christ has come into this world to bring life to all of mankind that believe on Him. He is the Bread of Life. He is the Living Bread. He has come down from Heaven to give life. He gives life to us poor, miserable sinners who live a dark world full of death caused by sin in this world. He come to bring life, both spiritual and physical life.

We rightly deserve God's eternal wrath and displeasure on account of our many sins. We rightly deserve death. But, our Lord in His great love for His creation—for us—comes down from Heaven so that we might have a life with Him. This life with Him is created and sustained through faith, when we cling to Him and His promises; His promises of an eternal life with Him in Heaven. He even will come down again on the Last Day and give you, me, and all the saints waiting for that Last Day a physical life, a resurrection of our bodies that will live on forever in joy and happiness over what our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has done for us.

And that is how we obtain the life He desires to give to us. He has to give us His flesh. Or probably more accurately, our Lord + Jesus Christ must give His flesh to the tree of the holy cross. He has taken on our flesh, so that He might offer it as a sacrifice for us on the cross. Here we see how the Incarnation, which we heard of a lot during the Christmas season, was all about the sacrifice on our behalf that we will observe in just a few Fridays. Our Lord will give His innocent and perfect flesh to the tree of the holy cross, so that the penalty of our sin will be paid and we will have life. He gives His flesh for the life of the world. We who believe the promise of these words cling to our Lord in faith and receive the reward which He won on the holy cross.

He who believes the words and promises of our Savior has exactly what they promise: everlasting life in Heaven.

Unfortunately, the world is full of those who desire to remain dead in their unbelief. They want no part of God, nor of His salvation. They want no part of the cross. Nor any part of our Lord's suffering and death. They cannot bear to look upon the sufferings of our Lord, for in the hidden regions of their conscience they no all too well that the torments that our Lord endured on the night of His betrayal and on the day of His death, they will endure in Hell for all eternity. Contemplate that for

a moment. The sufferings our Lord endured. The torments done to His flesh both at the hands of the Jews, the Romans and on the cross, are the torments and trials that we deserve on account of our many sins; on account of our sinful nature.

This is the punishment that awaits all those who refuse to believe on the Lord + Jesus for their salvation. They will endure this punishment eternally in Hell. This realization should cause us to respond in a few ways. First, it should cause us to cling even more to the object of our salvation the throne of Christ—the holy cross. He paid the penalty for our sins with His flesh, so that we might have life and be freed from the bondage of sin and death. Therefore, we should cling in faith to what He has done for us, for His actions are our salvation.

Our second response when we realize what torments await unbelievers in Hell is to have compassion on those who are outside of the Church, and desire that they may cease their enmity toward the Church and join us in faith toward Christ. Just as we pray every time we celebrate the Divine Service. We pray that the enemies of the Church might no longer be the enemies of the Church, but instead join us here whenever we gather in the presence of our Lord + Jesus Christ and His Word. Therefore, since there are still many who reject our Lord and His good gifts, we should continue to pray diligently for them that they might cease resisting the calling of the Holy Ghost and come into this holy house to receive the gifts that our Lord would have them enjoy, just as we enjoy them now.

Our third response is similar to the second. We should always be prepared to invite those who desire to join us. Always be prepared to give an account of your faith and invite those who you have religious talks with in your daily lives. For it is here in this holy house that we come face to face with our Lord and His Word. He creates an intimate environment where He speaks His Word and we are enlightened and strengthened in the one, true faith.

This is why it is important for us to be here whenever we gather, but it is also important to lovingly encourage those we love and know in our daily lives to join us, for the Lord + Jesus desires to give life to all the world.

We get a foretaste of this when we enjoy this holy meal of our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine. We eat the body of our Lord that was offered on the tree of the holy cross as a once and only sacrifice for us so that we might have life with Him and all the saints in Heaven eternally. When we eat and drink the Lord's Supper, we remember the sacrifice that He made, and know that on account of it our sins are forgiven.

Therefore, my dear friends, during this week of Laetare, rejoice. Give thanks to God that He has come down from Heaven and taken upon Himself our flesh, so that He might offer it up as a sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross, all so that we might have life and have it eternally. Thanks be to God for His great love for us that caused Him to offer up His Only-Begotten Son as a ransom for us. No greater love can be shown to you for how much the Lord loves you and forgives you. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!