

## Written Copy: John 6:53-58 “Intimately Abiding in Christ”

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost – Proper 15

Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Text: John 6:53-58

<sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

### The text's intent

Jesus concludes His discourse that reveals Him as the Living God who has come to grant to all who believe life now and eternal life to come. He explains this gift by using the metaphor of eating His flesh and drinking His blood to describe the Holy Spirit empowered act of believing in Christ, and His death and resurrection granting life with God now that continues on to eternal life to come. All that hold this by faith have God the Son, Jesus Christ, abiding with them and in them, and along with Jesus the Father and the Spirit. Those who do not believe do not have true life but are headed to the eternal death their sinful actions earn for them. Jesus is God the Son who has come in the incarnation to grant this gift of true life now and eternal life to come to all that are called by the Father and granted faith by the Spirit to hold fast to Him and His work of salvation. Those who continue to eat/believe will be raised on the Last Day. But the Jews grumble and disbelieve, rejecting the work of the Spirit and the gift He has come to bring them because it cannot be accepted by human logic and reasoning, but only by the work of the Spirit, so they turn and walk away from following Him. Jesus asks the Twelve if they are going to do likewise. Peter responds for the Twelve with the great testimony of faith, "Lord, to whom should we go? You have the powerful words that grant eternal life."

### Focus Statement:

Jesus is the Incarnate God who has come to grant us life now and eternal life to come. He does that through His power filled Gospel words by which the Father draws us to Him by the working of the Spirit. With the metaphor of eating His flesh and drinking His blood he describes how faith changes us, intimately joining us to Christ and His saving work. He lives in us and we live in Him as long as faith abides. Our spirit will never depart from His presence. And while our bodies will die, He will raise them to eternal life on the Last Day.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

Like the Jews we struggle with Jesus' declaration of who He is and why He has come. While we like Him as the provider of forgiveness of sins, we forget that He is God who abides in us by faith, who knows the ways we desire to live like the world. And we balk at His claim of exclusivity on our lives as not just Savior but Lord who calls us to live our lives in the light of His revelation.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

When the world tries to draw us away from Christ the Spirit through the Gospel brings to us the revelation and faithful confession of Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Through repentant faith creating and sustained in our gathering for worship Christ remains abiding in me, and I in Him.

### Subject Sentence: Christ intimately abides when we eat/drink His body

## **Introduction: Supervisor and Apprentice**

Those of you who've worked in skilled trades, or even those of you who've worked at the plant probably began your career as an apprentice. You began to learn the job by working alongside someone else who taught you and supervised you as you learned the ropes. Even outside of the workplace your parents acted in many ways as supervisors as they taught you how to live on your own, raise a family, cook and clean, fix the car, and any number of other things. They weren't perfect, but most of our parents did the best they could to raise us up. Of course, along the way, you may also have learned from them what not to do. Textbooks can only show you so much, we need to supplement textbook learning by getting in there and doing it ourselves, making mistakes, and learning from them.

I began my career at Hillers as a stock boy in the Dairy Department. I worked there for 2 years, working hard, showing up every day, showing initiative. They must've saw something in me they liked because after those two years they decided to promote me to be an Assistant Store Manager. For my last 6 months as a union stock clerk I was supposed to be in training. But because Hillers always ran as tight as possible on payroll, and because they prided themselves not being out of stock on sale items and important staple products, for those 6 months I worked stock more than learned how to be a manager.

So, when it came time for me to assume a non-union management position at another location, I was woefully unprepared. I did work side by side with another manager for about a week, opening with him 4 days, closing the store with him twice, and working part of a shift on Sunday with him. He did mentor me somewhat, but not as adequately as I really needed. He would disappear a lot and leave me in charge of the front end while he snuck off to snort cocaine. When it was my turn to go solo, especially managing the closing shifts and Sundays by myself, it did not go well. The employees didn't respect me, and I hadn't yet learned how to motivate them in a positive way. Needless to say things often looked rough the next day. I dreaded when the Store Manager would leave for the day, often feeling I was being abandoned to the wolves. To make matters worse the neighborhood was not the best. And a lot of sketchy characters would frequent the store at night, up to no good, often in cahoots with some of the employees, sometimes looking for the Store Manager to sell him something. And I didn't know how to handle any of this.

## **Learning to Live as Good Christians in this Fallen World**

Proper on the job training is important not just in the workplace, or in the home, but in our life of faith as well. We need to learn how to live in this fallen world as children of God. The Apostle Paul, working as a supervisor of the Christian faith for the Church in Ephesus gives sound advice on living the Christian life in **Ephesians 5:6-7**, **6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** **7 Therefore do not become partners with them;** Like those at the Church of Ephesus we are surrounded and live side by side with “sons of disobedience”, those who lack faith in God. They may try to advise us when times of difficulty and trouble come. Some of their advice may be useful, but advice that doesn’t come from a life of faith is often filled with empty words that makes things worse, not better.

Paul advises us in **Ephesians 5:10-13** **10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.** **11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.** **12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.** **13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.** We need to be discerning about what our fellow man does, making sure that we are not drawn into thinking, speaking, or acting the same way. We are called to be the light of Christ in the world, exposing the evil people do toward one another, not joining in with gossip about another, but as much as you truthfully can defending their honor. We are not to join in with the negativity on Facebook, not supporting the Cancel Culture’s drive to shun those with differing opinions, but to listen to all with respect and open ears.

Paul says in **Ephesians 5:17** **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** There it is, plain as day. To successfully live the life Christ calls us to we simply need to understand what the will of the Lord is. And where can we look to discover the will of the Lord? His commands and instructions are right here in Holy Scripture. That is how we are to discern good advice and counsel from bad. And that’s important because as Paul warns in **Ephesians 5:6** **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** If we get caught up in those empty words of culture, if we start living as our unchurched neighbors do, if we see Jesus’ death and resurrection as the freedom to satisfy our sinful hearts desires, then we may end up walking away from our faith. When we become one with our godless culture, we will receive on the last day what our faithless actions have earned for us, the eternal wrath of God poured out on body, soul, and spirit in eternal hell.

So, the solution is simple. Read your Bible, know God's instructions about how we are to live, and go do it, right? Easier said than done. The problem is that darkness that exists in the world around us also exists in your heart and mine. Christ calls me to put Him first in all I say and do, giving over my time, my talents, and my treasures to glorify Him. We are to do this not just on Sunday, not just when we feel like it, but all the time. We are to do this especially when He puts someone in our path that has a need we can help with. And at that I sometimes fail. He calls us to love your neighbor unconditionally, and we really try to do that, except for that one person that we just can't stand. We need more than just a handbook of instructions. We need a supervising mentor extraordinaire twenty-four seven. We need Jesus.

## **Jesus Abides In Us As the Mentor Who Changes Us**

We need more than just knowledge about who Jesus is and what He calls us to do. We need the intimate relationship He provides us by faith. And how does He provide this? **John 6:53-54** <sup>53</sup> **So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.** We remember from last Sunday that Jesus is using the metaphor of "eating His flesh and drinking His blood for believing that He is who He says He is and trusting that He has come to grant us eternal life when we believe in Him. How can His flesh and His blood help us in such a great way?

**John 6:51** **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."** He is God the Son, come down from heaven to be incarnate as a human being for the purpose of giving His body and His blood on the cross so that you would not perish but have everlasting life. You consume His flesh and drink His blood by the faith given to you in baptism. That faith has saved you from an earthly existence that is not really living but marching toward eternal dying. This faith saves you from the fate of the sons of disobedience, even when you sometimes think, speak, and act like them. It's the miracle of conversion that happened to you at your baptism.

Through this miracle we have been saved from death to life eternal. But this wasn't just a once and done intervention, this isn't just a once and done feeding. **John 6:56-58** <sup>56</sup> **Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."** He keeps giving to us this gift of His flesh and blood to eat and drink. We continue to feed on His flesh whenever we hear the Gospel Message, whenever we partake of the Sacrament of the Altar, whenever we remember our baptism. Through these means the Holy Spirit empowers us to grow in our faith, to grow deeper in our love for Jesus and one another.

This is because Jesus comes to abide with us and in us, and we abide with Him. It's happening in your life and in your heart right now. He comes to give you the power and ability to live out your life as a member of His body, His Church. He comes to you as the Supervisor/Mentor who never goes away, never stops instructing, never stops loving, He is there pointing out the ways you live in the darkness of the unbelieving world, the ways you live in opposition to His call to love and forgive others. He abides in you to generate in your heart His forgiving love, so that you can begin to forgive others as He has forgiven you. He is constantly drawing you away from a life lived in the world to a life lived in intimate unity with Him. And he promises He will never depart. Instead, when your body finally give out on this earth, He will send His angels to take you to be at His side, where you will patiently await the Last Day and eternity to come.

### **Our Life Abiding in Him**

Living out your life as a Christian is not like God being the mentor/coach who stands on the sidelines, calling in plays, and criticizing you when you do it wrong. He is not on the sidelines, He is there with you out on the field, every play, every day, every hour. He is there in your heart moving you to honor Him with your thoughts, words, and actions. When you are hurt by someone else, He is there with His love to heal your broken heart, to generate His love in your heart by which you can love your friends and your enemies. He is there to keep providing you with what is needed, for body and soul. He is the Bread of life that is what we truly need for every day of our life.

Every day we are tempted to join in with the darkness that the world lives in. As we face the difficulties of this day and age, we often face the same choice that was set before the Israelites in **Joshua 24:14-15** <sup>14</sup> **"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.** <sup>15</sup> **And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."** We are faced with following the things and ways our culture follows, worshiping the gods of fame, fortune, money, and pride. We want to put these gods away from us but it's hard to do so sometimes. We want to choose to follow our Lord obediently but our sinful heart works against us, just as it did for the Israelites in Joshua's day. They promised to choose to serve only the LORD, but they failed.

The only way Joshua could honestly say **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD** is because the Holy Spirit had taken up residence in his heart and mind. Those times when he failed in the obedience God called him to live in, he sought the grace and mercy of the loving and forgiving God he put his faith and trust in. That loving God did not abandon Joshua, and He has not abandoned you to flounder in this world of temptation. That loving God, who is Christ Jesus, has come to you in the most intimate way, by faith. He is there with you moving you to works of obedience. He is there to lovingly point out how your works fall short. Then He is there to pick you up by His loving and strong hand, the same hands that took the nails for you on the cross. He points your attention to His death and resurrection and confirms in your heart that all has been forgiven. As you eat His flesh and drink His blood by faith. He abide in you as long as you abide in Him through the means of grace. Through that means, He keeps you in this intimate relationship. He loves you more than anyone else and gave all that He had for you. He will never let you go.

## **Conclusion**

Those first few years of management at Hillers were hard. I felt abandoned to the wolves at times. The only criticism I received was the negative kind when the big bosses from the main office would stop in. They would make sure to tell me all about all the things that were wrong, how stupid I was, and what they would've done in my place. I heard these things and resented them because they didn't help here and now. They weren't there in my place at the time, and didn't understand the total picture of what was going on, or that I was making decisions under pressure, and not afterwards from the comfort of hindsight. They weren't standing there when customers were complaining and demanding my attention, bringing in items to return left and right, while at the same time employees were misbehaving, disappearing, not doing their jobs. The supervisors so called "words of wisdom" were garbage in my ears.

Not so with our abiding Savior. He is always here with us. He knows how hard the temptations of the world can hit you. He knows the feeling of having a good friend sin against you or talk behind your back. He knows how hard it is to forgive others who have hurt you. He knows you. He knows your hurt and your fear. He cares about you. He loves you, even when you disobey. He hasn't left you to struggle on your own but is here abiding in you and with you. He gives you His body and blood so that you abide in Him. He is truly here through the means of grace, being the Bread of Life for you, providing all you need body and soul for whatever lies ahead. He is here with you right now and will never leave you. And He will be there when you take your last breath in this world, to take you to His side, and raise your body and soul on the Last Day so that you will live with Him forever, never to depart from Him. Amen.