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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Pentecost 12

John 6:41-51
Eat Right

*(O Lord,) How sweet are Your Words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth. Amen.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Mediterranean, South Beach, Paleo, Keto Diet.
Low Carb, High Protein, Low Fat, sugar free.
Organic, high in antioxidants, the food pyramid, My
plate, nutritional information.

TV, radio, internet, books, magazines and every day
conversation are all filled to overflowing with the
latest ideas and encouragements to **Eat Right**. Even
if we don't like to actually do so it, yet we know it is
important to eat what is good and healthy.

Today, Jesus teaches us to **Eat Right** spiritually. If good diet is important for our bodies, then the right spiritual food for our souls is critical! May the Holy Spirit lead us to always **Eat Right**.

Now please don't misunderstand what I'm about to say. It is truly good and God pleasing for us to take care of our bodies, and I know I need to do better. But no matter how diligently you diet, no matter how regularly you exercise, it can only do so much. In the long run, and sometimes shorter, the end result is the same.

Consider this: 100% of people who drink water, will die. The same is true of those who have a healthy diet. 100% of those who eat their veggies will die, just as 100% of those who live off junk food will die. 100% of those who hit the gym will die, just as 100% of those who are couch potatoes will die.

Jesus said it this way: **Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.** I can't prove it until heaven, but I'm pretty confident that the **manna** God miraculously gave the Israelites every

day in the wilderness was off the charts when it came to good nutritional value.

But 100% of Israelites who ate manna died. 100% of us, who have not eaten manna will die. This shouts at us that there is a problem we can never fix. By nature, our relationship with God, the giver of life is broken. We stand separated from Him, condemned as sinners in His holy sight, completely deserving endless death in the despair of hell.

Jesus clearly tells us there is nothing *we* can do to stop it: **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.** A physical diet for your body can't bring you closer to God. But neither can any spiritual solution human beings could ever "cook up."

No one can come... this excludes every attempt to work our way to God by our own efforts. **No one can come...** this blows away any notion that we can decide or choose to come to God or even meet him part way in saving ourselves. **No one can come...** eliminates our smarts and strengths when it comes

to getting right with God. It leaves us helpless and utterly dependent on the Lord to save us!

Thank God, saving is the Lord's specialty! We couldn't come to Him, so He came to us: **I am the living bread that came down from heaven.**

God Himself, the Son of God, came to this world of misery and death to rescue us. The Lord who has no beginning or end has a birthday, because He became our flesh and blood brother through that most amazing of miracles we celebrate at Christmas: *Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary.*

That Jesus came **down from heaven** is alone worth our utter amazement for all eternity! So how much more when we hear this: **This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**

Jesus took upon Himself our broken, imperfect, damning sinful condition and on the cross, giving Himself up to death to give us **life!**

I am the bread of life... If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. 100% of those who eat earthly food will die, but 100% of those who eat of Christ, **the bread of life will not die, but live forever,** they have eternal life! Death for them is now but the gateway to heaven's joys. And at the last day Christ will raise them up to perfect life and health!

But how do you **eat** of Jesus, **the Bread of Life?** In verse 47, Jesus gives us the answer without any of the picture language: **I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.** To **believe** that Jesus is God's Son whose life, death and resurrection saves us is the same thing as to **eat** of Jesus, the **Bread of Life,** for both result in eternal **life.**

Two children were arguing about who should get the last cookie. One of them ended the argument by stuffing the cookie in his mouth! Now it was his!

Like eating that cookie, faith receives Jesus' saving work our very own. Faith doesn't just believe Jesus **gave his flesh... for the life of the world,** but that

He gave it for *you*. That Jesus lived and died *for you*, to save *you*! Faith trusts that all Jesus did and won, He gives to you personally! The only way to **Eat Right** spiritually, is to trust in Jesus Christ alone.

We already noted how Jesus says only God can give us such faith: **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.**

But how does God create faith? Jesus answers: **It is written in the Prophets (the Bible): 'They will all be taught by God.'** Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. This is no different than what the Spirit had Paul write in Romans: **Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

So **Eat Right** as you feed on Christ's promises in Word and Sacrament!

You and I, we *need* this encouragement to **Eat Right**. For just as it is so often easier to reach for candy instead of fruit or chips instead of carrots, so we be

tempted to trade the **Bread of Life** for spiritual junk food.

That's what happened in our reading. Right in front of the crowd stood Christ, **the Living Bread... from heaven**, but they tossed Him aside. They **grumble(d) about him** because they couldn't get past what their eyes saw: his lowly human nature. Instead of forgiveness and eternal life, they were more concerned about the here and now, getting their bellies filled, hoping Jesus would do a repeat of the feeding of the more than five thousand.

And we so often do the same. Christ **the Living Bread... from heaven** still stands right before us, in the words of the Bible, written and spoken, as well as in the washing with water through the Word of our Baptism and as He brings us His body and blood with the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

But how easily we can become bored with these treasures where Jesus Himself meets us, because words and preaching, bread and wine and water

look so lowly, not nearly as flashy and appealing as the spiritual junk food Satan wants us to swallow.

Rather than hungrily feeding upon Christ's promises in Word and Sacrament like the starving diving into a feast, we sinfully poke at God's delicacies like they were spiritual equivalent of Brussel sprouts. How easily we can mix up priorities, acting like entertainment, sports, career, hobbies, relationships, a few more minutes of sleep and so many other good gifts were more important than the time spent letting Jesus feed us with Himself.

Do you see how sinfully pitiful, hungry, and wretched you are, just as I am? If you do, then also see the most amazing thing of all!

Though He has every right to be fed up with us and cast aside a thousand times over, yet Jesus Himself still stands before us today! Through lowly looking, but ever glorious Word and Sacrament, Jesu the **Bread of Life** fills your soul with good things: forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the guarantee of **life everlasting!**

This very day the Father in heaven eagerly **draws** you closer to **Jesus**. He was doing that as at the start of the service as you saw the sign of the cross and you heard the saving name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, recalling how that same name was personally placed upon you in Baptism, claiming you as part of God's own family!

Though all you saw was a pastor speaking words, yet the Lord of life drew you to Himself in the forgiveness announced at the start of service, as you heard again how Jesus **gave his flesh for the life of the world**.

Since you are part of the **world**, you can be certain that Jesus does not turn you away, but still welcomes you and forgives you, giving you a promise not even the grave can steal: **I will raise him, (I will raise her) up at the last day**.

Through the Scriptures read and sung in worship, Jesus himself has given you **the bread that comes down from heaven, which one may eat and not**

die. We call it coming to church or reading our Bibles, but as Christ reminds us, it is being **taught by God**, and fed by Jesus.

So come often to the table Jesus sets in the Gospel! Hungrily devour His promises, trusting His forgiveness. **Eat Right** by feeding your faith upon Jesus, the **Bread of Life**. Amen.

O Taste and See that the Lord is good. Blessed are they who take refuge in Him! Amen.