

Does This Offend You?

John 6:51-69

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, August 16, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life which came down from heaven." Does it offend you that Jesus says that He came down from heaven? Jesus is son of Joseph from Nazareth is He not? Jesus has a background the same as you and me. Yet He claims to have come down from heaven? If He claims to have come down from heaven and is the son of Joseph and is from Nazareth and has a background the same as you do, does it offend you that He claims to have come down out of heaven? What is He? God's gift to mankind?

Jesus said that the bread which He Himself will give is His flesh for the life of the world. Does this offend you? Remember last Sunday we reviewed what that means. The Old Testament sacrifices were blood and flesh sacrifices. The sacrificial animal was slaughtered. Their blood was drained into bowls. Their flesh was sacrificed or eaten by the priest in a special way. The priest threw the blood against the sides of the altar or put it on the horns of the altar depending on what God had instructed him for that particular sacrifice.

Jesus is saying that He is a sacrifice like the sacrifices of old. He is like them in that His blood is drained by crucifixion. He is like them in that He offers His flesh into death. He is like the sacrifices in that He dies on behalf of others.

Jesus is superior to the Old Testament sacrifices in that He is a man. He is a sinless man. He came down from heaven. Jesus therefore does not die on behalf of one individual worshipper's sins on one particular occasion. Rather Jesus dies on behalf of all of humanity and He dies in regard to all of their sins.

The Old Testament sacrifices therefore serve as pointers to Jesus so that we recognize Him and understand His work when He dies. They also serve as the means by which the sacrifice of Jesus makes it into the Old Testament and is brought to the Old Testament people of God. They also culminate in the sacrifice of Jesus. In other words since they were pointing ahead to Jesus throughout the time of their use, when Jesus finally does come, they are unnecessary. Jesus has so completely fulfilled and surpassed them that there is no longer a need for animal sacrifice. Those Old Testament sacrifices are maintained in perpetuity through the sacrifice of Jesus.

That means that the whole Old Testament sacrificial system that pervaded all of Israel's history for 1500 years was all about Jesus the whole time. It was about His crucifixion and His shed blood. It was not about anything else. Does this offend you?

Our Lord states that the individual who eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life. Jesus promises that He will raise such a person from the dead on the Last Day.

If our Lord is the culmination of the Old Testament sacrifices then by definition He must be edible. God commanded the priests in the Old Testament to eat the flesh of certain sacrificial animals once they had been sacrificed. Such flesh made the priests holy. It was God's way of bestowing His own holiness upon them.

Thus also there must be a way for the priests of God to eat the flesh of Jesus if indeed He is the culmination and fulfillment of all of the Old Testament sacrifices. Our Lord has indeed left us a way of doing this. It is the Sacrament of the Altar. In the Sacrament of the Altar Jesus gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink. He does it in a supernatural way. He came down from heaven after all and

therefore has the power to offer us His body to eat and His blood to drink in a supernatural way. Using His almighty power Jesus places His body into the bread in a way that cannot be explained, but in a way that makes it possible to eat it. When we eat the bread we eat His body as well. In the same way using His almighty power Jesus places His blood into the wine. He does it in a way that cannot be explained.

When you eat the body of the Lord it is obvious that includes His flesh. You are eating the flesh of the Lord. When you eat of the flesh of the Lord He fulfills the Old Testament sacrifices again. Just as the priests ate the flesh the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament so also the New Testament priests eat of the sacrifice of the New Testament which is the flesh of Jesus which He gives for the life of the world. That means that you are priests of the New Testament. You are priests of Jesus Christ. You eat His flesh. By eating His flesh He makes you holy. He forgives you of your sins.

Just like Jesus is superior to the Old Testament sacrifices in other ways so also He is superior to the Old Testament sacrifices in the realm of eating. He is powerful enough to give His body whole and not in parts. He is powerful enough to give you His body and give everyone else at Holy Communion His same body. He is powerful enough to give You his body to eat this Sunday and then to do so again on a subsequent Sunday. It is His way of giving You His holiness. He forgives you of your sins.

Does this offend you? Does the notion that our Lord would put something as precious as His body and blood into bread and wine offend you? Does it offend you that our Lord would sanctify something as common as eating, something which we do all of the time, for the purpose of giving you his body and blood? Does it offend you that such eating and drinking is not spiritual enough? Does the weirdness of the whole thing offend you? Does it offend you that it sounds like cannibalism if you can get past the whole supernatural aspect of it all? Does it offend you that this is His chosen method to bring you the forgiveness of sins? Does it offend you that He chooses this method to give you eternal life?

Indiana Jones was mistaken. One does not need to go on a crusade to find the cup of Christ that gives eternal life. One needs only go to church.

Does it offend you that Jesus is superior to Moses? Does it offend you that in spite of the grand scope of the miracles that Moses performed at God's command, that the miracles of Jesus are greater even though they seem to be smaller in scope.

In fact does anything that our Lord says in John, chapter six offend you? Does anything that our Lord says offend you?

The words that Jesus says are spirit and they are life. The words of the apostles that Jesus sends are the words of Jesus and they are spirit and they are life. Do any of the words of Jesus offend?

What about these words from Jesus: Anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another commits adultery. What about these words from His apostle: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. As the Church submits to Christ so also wives shall submit to their husbands in everything. What about these other words from the apostle: I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be silent. What about the words from the apostle that murderers, idolaters, adulterers, homosexual offenders, swindlers, liars, thieves, drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God? What about any of the passages of the apostles where they write that homosexuality is a sin? Does this offend you? They are the words of Jesus. They are the words of His apostles. They are therefore the words of the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who makes alive. Our flesh and its notions count for nothing.

What we think does not matter. Our flesh counts for nothing. There are people who say that those parts of the Bible that I have quoted are for back then and they are not for right now. They point out how humanity has advanced since the days of the inspiration of the Scriptures. They conclude that God

was saying what He said back then for the people back then for the understanding that they possessed back then. They come to the conclusion that those parts of the Bible do not apply now.

What they do not explain is how do we determine which parts of the Bible are for us now and which parts are only for "back then." It seems like as time goes by more and more people say that more and more parts of the Bible are for back then and not for right now. I have even seen a book that says that the crucifixion of our Lord Himself which is the source of our eternal life is nothing more than a theological construct designed to appeal to people of ancient times who thought that the wrath of God needed to be appeased and appealed to the crucifixion of Jesus to do so. The book then concluded that since such notions of the wrath of God are outdated since not very many people believe in the wrath of God any more that the saving nature of the crucifixion of Jesus is just a theological notion of ancient times and not something that applies to us today.

Well, once the crucifixion of Jesus and its meaning are relegated to the past there is not much left for the Bible to say. This is to say nothing of the resurrection of our Lord which is denied by reasonable people left and right. Pretty soon none of it is relevant and the only thing that these people have to replace the Bible with is their own ideas. But their ideas are simply the opinion of men. There is absolutely nothing about contemporary notions of God and our place with Him that make them superior to any other notion that people have had about God throughout history. Such notions are of the flesh. The flesh counts for nothing.

The words that Jesus has given to us are Spirit and they are life. The Spirit is the one who makes alive. He speaks to us His words and we believe in Jesus and He raises us up on the Last Day.

Does this statement offend you: I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. Our Lord Jesus Christ said that. He claimed to be the only way to God and that all other ways to God are false. He claimed to be the truth and that anything that contradicts Him no matter how up-to-date it is is false. He claimed to be the life and that everything else brings death. Does this offend you?

In fact does any of what Jesus and His apostles say offend you? You may leave if it does. You do not need to stay. Our Lord will not compel you to stay. Our Lord will not beg you to stay. You may leave, if you wish. If the words of our Lord and His apostles are more than you can handle there is the door. Your car awaits in the parking lot. You may drive home and never come back. You may close your Bible and never read it again.

Jesus will let you go. He will not lose you. He will not drive you away. But He will let you go, if you wish. You may go. If our Lord offered that the Twelve should leave Him, He will offer it to you as well. If even He asked His apostles, "Do you wish to go also?" then He will also let you go, if you wish. You may leave.

Or you may stay.

After all, what if Jesus is right? There is nothing concrete to tell Him that He is wrong. He was crucified. There is historical testimony to that event all over the place. In fact historians have pointed out that there is more written record of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth than any other event from the ancient world.

What if His crucifixion is His flesh which He gives for the life of the world thereby giving you eternal life? What if eating His flesh and drinking His blood does hallow you? Can you afford to pass it up? Can you afford to miss out on it? What if His words do give eternal life because they are the words of the Spirit? Can you afford not to listen, even if they do offend your modern sensibilities? What if the

world view of Jesus is the world view of the Creator and therefore the proper way of looking at the world instead of what modern intelligentsia offers us? What if this Jesus from Nazareth, the Son of Joseph, really did come down from heaven? If He did, then He is the One who reveals the Father. What if this Jesus really did rise from the dead?

If He did, then to whom else shall we go? He has the words of eternal life.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.