

SALVATION ASSURED TO ALL WHO EAT WITH THEIR EARS

The Father opens our ears to hear Jesus -- The Holy Spirit enables ears to eat Jesus' flesh.

John 6:44-51

TEXT: *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Careless readers of Scripture confuse Jesus' words in regard to this section of Scripture and his institution of the Lord's Supper. They are two separate events. And this is very important.

The Lord instituted the Lord's Supper for the first time at the end of his ministry on the night before he died on the cross. There Jesus took unleavened bread and grape wine, gave them to his disciples and said, "Take and eat; take and drink. This is my body; this is my blood." And so without question we eat with our mouths the bread and wine, and according to the words and promises of Jesus, our almighty God, we eat and drink bread and wine while at the same time of this eating and drinking, Jesus gives us his actual flesh and blood. Yes, this is a mystery, a miracle that surpasses all understanding. Yet it is made clear by the apostle Paul's words: ***Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*** 1 Co 11 And that's why to this day, this sacred act is "closed" to those who are not of the maturity level, or who have not been instructed on this matter. When our children reach a level of maturity by which they are able to understand this this is a glorious mystery and have been so instructed, then they are "confirmed" and the Lord's Supper is "open" to them. What a blessed day is Confirmation Day!

But the incident before us in today's Scripture text occurred toward the beginning of Jesus' three-year ministry. Here Jesus also speaks about eating bread and says: ***This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*** However, the difference here in these words Jesus spoke is that he does not tell his listeners to eat bread and wine with their mouths, but with their ears. Here our Lord speaks figuratively: SALVATION ASSURED TO ALL WHO EAT WITH THEIR EARS The Father opens our ears to hear Jesus; The Holy Spirit enables ears to eat Jesus' flesh.

Jesus had just performed a mighty miracle often called "The Feeding of the Five Thousand." If we go back a few verses from our text, we note, however, that it wasn't just 5000 people that Jesus fed. Matthew's account of this miracle says: ***The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*** Mt 14 There could have been upwards of 10,000 men, women and children. And the miracle was that Jesus fed them all with

5 loaves of bread and two small fish!

The Bible says that after the people saw this miracle, they made plans to force Jesus into being their king. They followed him all around the county with this intent. That's when Jesus began to instruct them with these words: ***No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life.*** These people were following Jesus because they had been given free food. They saw his power. How that miracle appeared to human eyes that day we aren't told, but they were so impressed that they followed Jesus in order to make him their king.

However, listen to Jesus' warning: ***No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him... 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.*** Free food won't draw people to Jesus. Only the Heavenly Father who drags sinners to Jesus by their ears to consume Jesus, the Bread of Life, by LISTENING to the Word of God and to Jesus who is the Word made flesh, and to those whom the Lord has called to preach that saving word of life.

Today there many who chase after Jesus for blessings but have no heart to read, learn and inwardly digest the preaching of the Gospel. Throughout the United States and the world there are thousands of young people who have recently been confirmed, and instead of that Confirmation Day being a blessed day for them it was the last day that they will be in church for a long time. Do their parents seem to care? For most of these young teens their own parents live lives that marginalize worship and hearing the Word as one of the least among the priorities of life. What was begun in the hearts of their children by the Heavenly Father's loving instruction is now challenged by more exciting adventures of the world: high school, friends, college. That Jesus calls himself "The Bread of Life" and pleads with us to listen and be fed the spiritual food that comes down from the Heavenly Father's hand is not as exciting.

It wasn't exciting for the 5000 whom our Lord fed miraculously in the desert but then when they chased Jesus down were only met with more preaching about the forgiveness of sins. The Bible says: ***From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*** Jn 6 It is the greatest miracle in the life of a human when the Heavenly Father opens up our ears to hear Jesus and to believe him when he says: ***I am the bread of life.*** These people were following Jesus because they had been given food for the belly. Another miracle was needed that would enable them to eat Jesus with their ears.

Has this miracle occurred in your life? Do you eat with your ears? Has the Heavenly Father turned your hearing into a means by which you are able to consume with joy the words of our Lord? It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to eat salvation with our ears.

How do I know if the Holy Spirit has given ears that eat Jesus' flesh for the salvation of my soul? If I eat with my mouth, I have proof of such eating and drinking. I taste the flavor and the texture of the food. But the Holy Spirit is invisible to me. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is like the wind (Jn 3). Jesus said: ***Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*** Those Jewish followers of Jesus were well aware of the history of Moses and the

Israelites in the wilderness. For 40 years God showered them with daily bread from heaven which they called “manna.” Yet not one of those Israelites were around anymore to speak of that great miracle. That “manna miracle” was 1400 years before Christ. And of those who witnessed the Feeding of the 5000, not one of them would be around to the year 2016. And none of us will be around 100 years from now. But for those who hear the Gospel and believe it, a miracle has occurred in your heart that is able to consume The Bread of Life.

No matter how much earthly food and drink, comforts and conveniences, or pleasures that large amounts of money can buy for me and my children, the most important is to eat Jesus, the Bread of Life, for as Jesus says: ***If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*** This is true because God the Holy Spirit creates life and faith, and nourishes it through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. This is how you know that the Holy Spirit is with you and in you.

Today the Holy Spirit created a full-fledged Christian. Godly parents brought baby Grayson to Jesus where the Holy Spirit came down from heaven with the water of Holy Baptism according to our Lord’s written word and promise. Now listen carefully with your ears and hearts to what God’s Word says about baptism: It is ***the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.*** Titus 3 Hear that? God just created a Christian disciple! Now let us join together in encouraging Grayson’s parents to keep bringing Grayson to the “feeding trough” of Jesus, the Bread of Life so that one day in the future, when he has been instructed by God through his parents and Christian teachers, he may join the Church in eating Jesus’ body and blood, not with his ears, but this time with his mouth and soul in the blessed Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

However, the Holy Spirit empowers all Christians, young and old, to be able consume Jesus, the Bread of Life, with our ears. Unlike the Lord’s Supper where Jesus body and blood are truly present with the eating of bread and wine, consumption of Jesus, the Bread of Life, is figurative, symbolic eating with our ears.

But be careful. The Bible says that many who heard these things from Jesus were disappointed with such teaching. It only promised them forgiveness of sin. The Bible says that many of them walked away. They wanted food for this life. They wanted Jesus to be their personal “Burger King.” The Bible then mentions a most painful moment in Jesus’ ministry. It says: ***On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" ... Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ... The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." ... From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy one of God."*** Jn 6 God bless Peter!

And God bless all among us who have learned to consume Jesus with our ears! Amen