**“Arise and Eat”**

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Psalm 34:1-8

1 Kings 19:1-8

Ephesians 4:17—5:21

John 6:35-51

11th Sunday after Pentecost

“Jesus said, ‘**I** **am** the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **This** is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of **it** and not die. **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**.’”

Grace to you and **peace** from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

Our opening hymn reminds that “man shall not live by **bread alone**, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. But bread is not always “**alone**”. Sometimes it’s (as Jesus Himself points out) **also** the “Word that proceeds from the mouth of God”. He says: “**I am** the **bread** **of life**, **bread (literally)** that **came down from heaven**”. And “if anyone **eats of this bread**”, Jesus goes to, “he will **live forever**. And the **bread that I will give for the life of the world** **is My flesh**.”

And, so, into a “**Gentile” world of thought** … as well as into the **pagan** **influence of one named Jezubel** … **bread given to eat by people of God came from the “Word proceeding from His own mouth”**.

**Text**

We are learning of **our purpose** from the last half of the Book of Ephesians (chapters 4 to 6). So as to **decry** what he called “Gentile futility” and their “darkened understanding” (“ignorance” and “hardness of heart, “callousness” and “greed”), God through Paul taught against certain thought (as did Elijah to Ahab against his wife and Jesus through those offended with His Words in John 6. All present a **Christian “walk” that’s extremely different from a “Gentile” way of thinking**. One **receives what the Lord gives (in other words)** while the other remains **oblivious to such things**. One **gets what God wants to provide”** while the other, well, **hasn’t the (let’s call it) imagination to allow for it**.

“**Jezebel**” (even more than “**Gentile**” does) **caricatures** all that’s the bulk of a **settled-in** **“fallen” human nature**. The pagan queen of the so-called promised people’s southern kingdom **seduced** her King and most of her empire. It was for people (instead of paying attention to God and the things of the heavens), to, instead, **lust … very earthly**. Her appeal was to an **animal** in humanity. That encouraged, also, an **arrogance** … to **ignore**.

**Jews** (hearing from Jesus) “grumbled about Him and His Words”. This because they too were ignorant and unwilling to believe the **mystical things (incomprehensible) that He was saying about Himself**. “Isn’t this [**just**] Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” **Yes He was … however**. See, one doesn’t know Him if they don’t take to **take Him at His Words**. John chapter 6 **tests that**.

Ahab’s Jezebel **doesn’t believe in** fire from heaven. Jews **don’t believe in** a considering flesh in the form of bread. Gentiles **didn’t believe in** anything that they weren’t able to wrap their mind around. American’s? Authors write that we’ve lost our imagination. We **don’t (really) believe in (really)** the miracles and things mystical and mysterious.

And there’s a history of why that is. An author I read says that if we don’t reclaim an imagination, then we will be doomed to (as he puts it) “achieve only **superficiality, baseness, ugliness, and in the end extinction**”. None of that was meant as a compliment.

**Jezebel** took **her disbelief** out on Elijah. Rather than submit herself to a miracle, she threatened him after having ignored him. He ceased to talk to her and, ultimately, doom her to her own extinction by cruel death and, probably, an eternal one.

**Jesus** watched 20,000 people **walk away from Him**. They said, “that’s a hard saying”, so rejected it and Him. Who knows their eternity, but their existence on earth likely only embraced things that made them happy in ways acceptable to their ear. They certainly missed a hanging-out more with the Lord Jesus and may have missed that for all eternity. We don’t know.

And the Ephesians we know only **a little about**. Jesus talked to them, then, also **40 years after Paul does (or a lifetime later, recorded in Revelation)**. Some apparently **received feeding by God’s divine gifts** (translated as “**mysteries**” in English and “**Sacraments**” in Latin), but others did not. Jesus’ criticism was that the “eating of the tree of life” is granted to only those conquering (or submitting to the **mystical feeding-system of God**’s **Sacramental Means**).

For any struggling with it in **this room**, look how the “Angel of the Lord” provided Elijah for long-term sustenance (it wasn’t a new concept): “behold, an angel touched him and said to him, ‘**Arise and eat**.’ And he looked, and behold there was at his head a **cake baked on hot stones**, and the **Angel of the Lord** came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘**Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you**.’ And he **arose and ate and drank and** **went in the strength of THAT FOOD** forty days and forty nights.”

Jesus later said “**I am the bread of life**. **This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die**. **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**.”

I’ve told you before that every Word of Scripture is, first, literal, then everything else in figurative and analogy (and, probably, oodles of additional depth). It’s literal first. For instance, Jesus is the “narrow door”, but not because He’s made of wood with a handle on it, but because a door, first and foremost, is a **place of access**, and Jesus is **exactly that**. As we’ve called wooden things, now, that open to provide entry a door also, what we’ve taken is the main definition of the world which (then also) the wooden thing emulates. Jesus **is** “**bread**” and He’s the first of what we pray to receive in this day’s “**daily bread**”. He’s not all the bread in this world (“man does not live by bread alone” remember), but also remember that bread is not always “alone”. Sometimes it is (as Jesus points out) **the “Word that proceeds from the mouth of God” in bread**.

Paul says in Ephesians 4: “You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **They** are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in **them**, due to their hardness of heart. **Put off** your old self and **be renewed in the spirit of your minds**. **Put away** falsehood. **Let** each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor. **Give no opportunity to** the devil. **Do not** grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **by whom** you were **sealed” (through baptism) “for the day of redemption**.”

**Application**

Our **purpose** has “do **nots**” as well as “do’s”. As the lessons in chapters 5 and 6 continue, he’ll **move** more onto the “do’s”. But for now, the Lord (through Paul) is critical (highly critical) of a rationalistic **narrow-mindedness** that refuses to **receive what God says and wants for us**. It **avoids**, then, the **feeding He wants to do of His people**. 40 days (like 40 years in a wilderness) is a number denoting a lifetime of **nourishment (miraculous) in His mystical care for His people of “daily bread”**. The Roman church retains, still, a **daily eucharist (and good for them)**. The early church (recorded in Acts) **went that way too**, “**day by day**, attending the temple together and **breaking bread in their homes**”. If **we** go beyond 40 days without this “daily bread from Heaven”, then we’re close to **negligent**.

God has **His Means for providing “daily bread” (and the benefits of Jesus)**. **That’s the point** of these three texts together in not just a Lutheran set of readings, but of **the Church-overall** drawn to be heard together many hundreds of years ago. Being Christian is **acting like one**, first **fed and nourished for the journey that we’re on by the real “mysterious food / daily bread” of the Means of Grace**.

God says to us, “**arise and eat**”. **Do**, please (most certainly and regularly) in +Jesus’ name. Amen.