

The Rev Ken Wratten

13B Pentecost / Proper 15: August 19, 2018

Proverbs 9:1-6

Written by Solomon; Urging a godly life by applying divine wisdom to daily life.

Ephesians 5:15-20

Do not get drunk, be filled with the Spirit.

John 6:51-58

My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

Chapter 6: Bread of Life Discourse

Proverbs was written by Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. He describes Holy Wisdom's yearning for us to seek her out. Paul writes that living with wisdom involves our being filled with the Spirit of God. Jesus teaches how we can live by godly wisdom.

After the last three weeks of Gospel lessons talking about bread, today Jesus adds a challenge; instead of only describing himself as the bread of life, it is now time for his listeners to commit.

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” When I read those words from Jesus, they remind me of the Rite One Holy Eucharist “prayer of humble access”; BCP page 337, “Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.” But any consuming of blood was strictly forbidden by the Law in Leviticus. Jesus must be telling us something really important in this business of eating flesh and drinking blood!

For two weeks we heard Jesus describing himself as the bread of life. He used that term to explain that he wants us to take him into ourselves as spiritual nourishment every day; and to depend on him all day long. Jesus wants a relationship with us that will have a **stronger pull than material things** (our toys-my temp controlled coffee cup); a stronger pull than **the comfort of having a checklist of rules** (instead of a new heart); and a more deeply rooted faith than what we get from **living only for the spiritual highs** we might get to experience sometimes in our faith life.

In today's passage, Jesus explains that by feeding on him (certainly spiritually and not physically), there is a relationship being forged not only with him, but with God the Father.

V56. 57. “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.”

I can understand some level of “abiding” from a marriage that works well, or a friendship that is strong. You take on the other person's needs as if they were your own. You are willing to protect that person from physical or emotional harm. And you really know in your heart that they would do the same thing for you. One of the amazing joys I feel as Ruth and I pass through our 52rd year of marriage, is being so close that we know we can trust in each other to be there, to care, and to feel what the other one feels. [An example is a night I spent at the emergency room at Good Sam after I injured my leg. Around midnight I told Ruth that she should go home; this was not critical care, and she should rest. She said “I need to stay”. I

knew what she meant. That is “abiding”.] There is a deep comfort in that knowledge when there are so many relationships that are surface relationships. But I know it’s possible to share that deeper kind of bond. Jesus is inviting us into an even deeper sense of ‘abiding’; into the bond he and God the Father share.

Jesus wants you and me to move to that higher level of relationship with him; growing beyond prayers for our physical daily needs. He wants us to feed on him; to give him a home inside us. When we do that, he takes up residence in our lives, and feeds us spiritually.

V 57 “Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.”

Jesus is saying that in some mystical way that our linear thinking brains will never understand, when we take Jesus in, to live in us, the relationship he has with the Father is expanded to include you and me. We become part of that sacred relationship.

All of us in this sacramental church can recognize the connection between the language of the “body and blood of Jesus”, and the bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist. As a sacramental people, we don’t only look at the Eucharist as a memorial for what Jesus did for us. We recognize the spiritual power that lies within the physical act of eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus invites us to come together to feed on Him. His invitation is to take Him into ourselves, to feed on him in our spirits, and to allow him to abide in us, to give us spiritual wisdom to empower our lives in a new way.

So the Holy Eucharist is a formal way that we take in Christ, asking him to abide in us, and us in him. But there are millions of sacraments; countless ways that we can ask him to abide in us; for us to participate in God’s grace.

A Christian token on the ring for our car keys,

A pocket coin mixed in with the change in our pocket or purse,

Forward Day by Day on our kitchen table, so we can read while eating our bowl of breakfast cereal,

The YouVersion app on our smart phone, to have easy access to a Bible reading plan,

A wall sconce for lighting candles when we want to be reminded to pray,

An Anglican rosary,

A playlist of music by a monastic choir, or of John Michael Talbot, (in the car)

A decal on our car rear window – that we can see in our rear view mirror,

These are not only ways to witness to other people, but reminders for us, that God abides in us.

Think about new and creative ways to immerse yourself in Jesus Christ; to keep aware of him throughout your day; to invite him into yourself, for you to abide in him; and for him to abide in you.

Amen.