

Dear Fellow guests at our Savior's spiritual banquet

What is Good Spiritual Food?

- I. It comes down from heaven**
- II. It derives its nutrients from the cross**
- III. It has eternal value through faith**

INTRODUCTION

Vitamin A, Vitamin D, good cholesterol, bad cholesterol, high sugar content, protein, eat the right amount of the recommended daily allowance of the 5 major food groups. If you have not heard the talk about those and many more parts of good nutrition, you have either been living under a rock or intentionally turning a deaf ear. The talk and the encouragement about healthy eating and good nutrition are around us as a constant reminder. Our society has come to realize the value of a healthy diet. There are some who people might even say have become obsessed with their diet and watching what they eat.

As we today turn our attention to the second of the sections in John's Gospel where Jesus speaks of himself as the Bread of Life, our attention is directed not at our earthly diet and the food in our cupboards, refrigerators and on our tables, but Jesus' words ask us to look at our spiritual diet. Do we pay attention to the spiritual food which we are feeding out souls? Do we have a balanced spiritual diet? Are we aware of the need for proper spiritual nourishment for our souls? Jesus' words lead us to ask and answer the question **What is Good Spiritual Food?**. As we look at John 6:51-58, Jesus teaches us 3 important things about what makes good spiritual food and helps lead to a balanced spiritual diet: 1) It comes down from heaven, 2) It derives its nutrients from the cross and 3) It has eternal value through faith.

I invite you to listen for those thoughts as we read John 6:51-58.

I. It comes down from heaven

"You are what you eat". Have you heard that little cliché? It is a reminder that your health is only as good as the food which you put into your body. If you feast on a steady diet of soda, candy bars, potato chips and fast food – I think we all know what the result will be. If the only food you put into your body comes from a vending machine or a fast food restaurant, it's hard to have 3 good square meals a day.

Did you ever stop to look at the source of what you are feeding your soul? Are you end of life views, your moral compass and your sense of right and wrong shaped by TV, movies, the Internet, your friends? Are your friends, entertainment and lifestyle directing you toward good spiritual food or do they lead you to sample from the spiritual fast food menu? Jesus' words ask us to take a look as he tells us the source of good spiritual food – "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven.*" Our Savior is certainly directing us to gather together for worship with our fellow Christians as we are doing now. But that is not the only place that we find the living bread that came down from heaven. Gathering together with fellow Christians to study the Word or perhaps it is that quiet time by ourselves early in the morning or at the end of the day when we read our Bibles and let God's Word speak to the events of the day. Surrounding ourselves with Christian friends also helps insure that we are eating the living bread which comes down from heaven.

II. It derives its nutrients from the cross

John helps us understand that just like eating healthy for our bodies can sometimes be a challenge, if we are not looking at things properly for our souls, this can be difficult as well. "*Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*"

Jesus shows us how he as the bread of life can be the right food for our souls – “*This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*”

Just previous to this, Jesus had done that miraculous feeding of the 5000. He wants to help the people understand that to give them food for their bodies was not the main reason why he had come. He says more importantly is my own body which I came to sacrifice for the sins of the world! Our Savior reminds us that his main purpose for coming to this earth was to live and keep God’s Law where we fail miserably many times each day in sinful thoughts, words or actions. His purpose for coming was to also use his body to make payment for our sins so we don’t have to.

On this weekend when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we need to remember that Jesus here is **not talking about the sacrament**. This was early in his ministry and the Lord’s Supper had not yet been instituted.

Our Savior’s Words cause us to stop and ask ourselves – do I get the main nutrients for my soul from my Savior and the Gospel message of his Word? Or do I let that take a back seat to the good things I have done, my investments and net worth or the people I have around me in my life. Any time we do not let our souls derive their primary nutrients from the cross of Jesus, we have put God’s Word in second place or worse in our lives.

III. It has eternal value through faith

How many times do you eat a day? Do you remember those earlier days in your life when 3 meals was not enough? Maybe now you are at that point where eating twice a day is sufficient. The point is that we need to eat on a regular basis – we need to keep feeding our bodies. Jesus reminds us that if we feed our souls with the right spiritual diet, it’s not just going to help us day to day – it will have eternal value. “*If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*”

Does our spiritual diet, like our earthly diet reflect only a living and a long for the here and now? The last verse of our text reminds us when we feed our souls the proper spiritual food, we not only gain strength to live our faith now, we strengthen our hold on the hope of heaven.

It would be very easy to take these words and apply them only to ourselves. That is certainly where we need to start, but just like sometimes we not only look out for our own diet, but in love look out for others. In keeping with the rest of God’s Word, having the bread of life leads us to also share the bread of life. Parents, it means not only watching what your children put in their mouths and stomachs, but also what they feed their souls. It means Christian friends looking out for each other and if we see someone who is spiritually starving, we lovingly seek to get them back on a regular diet of the bread of life through the Word.

CONCLUSION

It is so easy to understand Jesus; words as we look at them today, but we have also seen how difficult it is to always use the bread of life as it is intended. May God bless each of us and help us be regular guests at the feast of the bread of life! Amen.