

John 6: 51-58

Vampires are very popular these days...just go into any bookstore and there are whole tables dedicated to Vampire novels and series...My wife and I also like a good vampire book or movie. In fact, DeSha was a journalism major and actually got a chance to interview Anne Rice, the author of many famous vampire novels down in New Orleans. She started out writing about the life of vampires and ironically she later wrote about the Life of Jesus. Their connected...

It's interesting that in order for a Vampire to live forever it must drink our blood and for us Christians to live forever we must drink Christ's blood.

See the appeal of the vampire is ego and power... for humans to be god-like...immortal! The difference being that one act is self-less (God sacrifices Godself for us) while the other is purely selfish (The vampire sacrifices our life for himself)! Me Me Me!

I would imagine that living forever on this planet could get old pretty fast and for Ann Rice's immortal main character Lestat, after experiencing everything this world had to offer, he decided to walk out into the sunlight! Be careful what you wish for...

For many of us this Gospel is difficult; John's gospel is usually down at the deep end of the pool...here we must consume the Living Bread in order to live. And in order to live, something must die, in this regard Jesus offers himself so that we may not only live, but live eternally.

Come to think of it, we ALL actually live by something else dying and giving its life for us...in fact if we don't consume something that is alive then we die!

What did you have for breakfast this morning...animals and plants die every day so that we might continue to live...and in fact the fresher something is...that is the sooner it was alive then the more nutrition it has... the more life it offers us.

See this story is all around us...it's what it means to be human and self-aware.

The first thing a newborn child does is to immediately partake of its mother to live. In fact, for Carbon the element that all living things on this planet are made up from... in order for us to exist as a carbon based life form...A star had to die! That's how the element carbon is created! So our physical bodies are literally made from resurrected star-stuff! So you see – you are all stars in God's eyes!

The theme in God's creation is that life, sacrifice and death are all interwoven...you can't have one without the other...ever!

So in the gospel of John, God brings "God-self" down to us so that we may join with him, not only bodily... but spiritually as well! In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God...and the word became flesh and lived among us...

As Christians we are called into union with the word, ingesting it and having that word grow within us (we call this the Liturgy of the word), and we are called into union with God, ingesting God self and having that seed grow within us (that's the Liturgy of the table)...so that here we all become one.

Now the theme of the last few weeks talked about bread...the feeding of the five thousand, the bread of life, etc... eating is something most of us do each day...and living our lives becomes not just an experience for our physical well being but point to something greater...the world to come...the eternal continually dips into our time and place...the here and the now.

John weaves these themes and metaphors throughout his Gospel.

The Eucharist is the pinnacle of this convergence each Sunday, without this spiritual union we have no real life in us.

One of my favorite sayings is from Pierre Tel De Chardin and I used it in my very first Sermon with you all: We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but rather we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

This meal, through Jesus, becomes the gateway to reconnecting with our spiritual self and our God...the Divine Source of All being...Not only for life now; but for life eternal...in spirit.

Life and Death play out in the act of consuming to live ...and like all the metaphors Jesus uses, it's organic...it's real... and it slaps us in the face, it confronts all our human experience. Roses are beautiful but they do have thorns, and animals are fine as pets but are also led to slaughter so that we may eat and live...there's day and night, good and bad, happiness and suffering here and now all throughout our physical existence...

But Jesus continually points us to something beyond this tactile human existence ...there's something beyond what we perceive with our physical senses...where these opposites don't have real meaning. Where opposites become one and are just two sides of the same coin...A reality where there is unity.

Jesus constantly pushes at the boundaries of our human existence to remind us of our one true self. Our spiritual self. Take for example day and night, we all know what that is and we can talk about it, but in reality there's no such thing is there... if we get in a spaceship and go outside the Earth's boundaries day and night does cease to exist...this concept has no relevant meaning outside of living on this planet and in a very specific place...because while we have day here...in Australia it's night...so which is it?

Likewise, happiness and suffering have no real meaning in eternity. Through Jesus we reunite with God. To deny our eternal nature is to be in eternal darkness...to be alone...to exist in a state of hell! And for some of us we don't have to die first to experience hell. Likewise, you don't have to die to experience heaven or that state of being that Jesus refers to as the Kingdom of God.

Here at this table, through the sacrifice of Jesus, eternity dips into this time and place...like the cross...it's an intersection of our physical being and our spiritual being...connected and whole NOW!

Our memorial feast of bread and wine joins us with the living Christ... And thus joined to God – we are forever!

That's John trying to say I am in the father and the father is in me and you are in me and we are in the Father...etc etc as will be continued in next week's gospel...

We who belong with...and are in Christ... in this memorial and eternal feast we are part of the whole...a community... which is in essence - eternal.

Made so NOT by any action we have taken...but by Jesus who laid down His life so that we may live not only in this time and place... but forever.

But we have to keep the correct posture here...We humans easily get confused...we are always , like in our vampire stories, striving for immortality ourselves – look at the way we use our history and our stories, our idolizing of people, places and things...

We're just like vampires, we want to live forever...When I was in LA... they were giving Michael Jackson a star on the sidewalk...note the word star... there was a large crowd... people were kneeling and crying...there was actually an internet poll voting on whether or not we should have a national holiday named after him...making one person into an idol to be worshiped and adored...

Now this was an entertainer... and in many ways a flawed and troubled person. We love to idolize folks and wash away their sins. And here in America we love to idolize sports figures and actors ...in Jesus' day these were gladiators and hypocrites (the Greek word for actor). Is that who you want to follow?

Why not idolize those who benefit mankind, our scientist and our teachers etc...it's ironic that people idolize these flawed people as gods. We look to broken humans in an imperfect existence to give us meaning.

We confuse the vessel (our temporary fleshy bodies) for that which is inside us... These temporary fragile vessels house for only a short time our essence...our souls! Our bodies are nothing more than fragile jars of clay.

Would any of you right now trade your life for a chance at being remembered?

Or would you trade your immortal spirit for an immortal physical shell?

Our human history, only a few thousand years at best, proclaims that all is transient, all is passing... and all this stuff is doomed to wink out of existence...

Yet we will always cling to this world and attempt to make our own lives eternal, our nation infinite, and our causes everlasting...even at the risk of losing that which is eternal!

Every flag of every nation, every symbol of every nation, every army and every congress or parliament of every nation will all be relegated to history's recycle bin at some future point in time...I promise!

Even our middle-aged sun in five billion years will cease to exist in a way capable of supporting human life on this planet. But the Holy, the universal church, eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking the blood of Jesus... whether in a cathedral or in a grass hut signifies and points us to something that is timeless...something forever. Our eternal spirit connected to its source never dies...

Cause NO Matter in this created universe will ever disappear... it just gets transformed in a comic dance of constant birth... death... and rebirth... transformation... or as Jesus referred to it...resurrection!

The eternal wisdom and word of God came down from heaven and became flesh in order that Jesus, as flesh, could give himself for the life of the world.

In John's gospel bread is a symbol used over and over again! When he says bread he is not talking about flour, water and yeast; he is talking about something that has come down from heaven (like manna in the dessert) to sustain us both physically AND spiritually. In John's gospel there's always more than meets the eye!

John's symbols describe what God is for us, the living water, the vine...the bread of life...It speaks to the incarnation! Remember God was the word and the word was made flesh...so we can take in that living flesh and live...to infuse ourselves and to join our spirit with the eternal Spirit...a life not tied to a time or place or to our specific vessel...but a life tied to God eternal.

The liturgy of the word allows us to ingest the word, the liturgy of the table to ingest the flesh...once infused with spirit we are now to carry God into the world through us...the liturgy of the WORLD! By the way...the word liturgy for those who didn't know literally translates as the work of the people...YOU!

Incarnation means action, and the Eucharist means we must get up, come forward, hold out our empty hands, sip the wine, receive, and chew the bread of life. God's word, God's universal body in God's sacrifice for us...Remembering and Reconnecting ourselves to that which is eternal Spirit... renewing and replenishing our souls.

It's where eternity dips into this time and place. Here and now this act gives us a foretaste of that heavenly kingdom where eternity is...where all become one with the living God!

For John it's about our physical life reminding us as Christians of our eternal connection with God through Jesus.

God sent Jesus down from heaven with the intention of taking it all back. He wants all of us and he wants us to have all of him...united...One. Jesus reminds us that He is the way, the truth, and the life! The gateway to God...the gateway to the eternal!

Jesus offered himself so that we may live eternally. Life – Sacrifice – Death and New Life again, you can't have one without the other!

So may we all learn to live our life from the perspective of the eternal –Where God meets us and the eternal dips into our lives.

May we make sacrifices for one another... so that others too may reconnect with God and find sustenance and wholeness in their lives... through you and me.

And, when our brief stay here is finished, may we ALL find peace and eternal life where the end of our time... meets God in all eternity!

Your faithful servant,

carmen