

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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By the grace of God, we have entered a New Year. During the holidays which have passed, we've undoubtedly enjoyed time with family and/or friends, sharing various foods and treats. Such fellowship, while eating and drinking, is a blessing from the Lord, to be sure. Hopefully, we've all spent multiple times worshiping and praising the Lord God, since He provides ALL that we need for this body and life; and, more importantly, the Lord God provides ALL that we need for spiritual and eternal life.

I recently read a short article, which caught my eye, in a hunting magazine. The article was titled: "Spiritual Food." The writer began by stating: "I love when a Sunday church sermon stays in my head all week." Then, the writer went on to say how he had missed a Sunday service, since he was hunting deer with some friends; but, on his way home from his hunting adventure, his wife gave him a "full recap of the pastor's message"— a message which was titled: "spiritual food." The article proceeded to relate that the pastor had told his listeners that "spiritual food" is "nourishing your soul with activities, people and thoughts that strengthen your faith and encourage you to live happily." Unfortunately, that particular pastor was quite unclear about what spiritual food actually is, for in conclusion, he left his listeners with the message that spiritual food is defined as: "the activities we share with family and loved ones, the acts of service we do for others, and the time we spend outdoors enjoying God's creation." Thus, such a teaching holds that "spiritual food" is nothing more than man's own good works!

Therefore, the topic we will consider in the light of the Holy Bible is one which can be of benefit to all of us, that being: **the food that matters most— real spiritual food.**

There was a time when Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five barley loaves and two small fishes. Then, it happened the following day, **"When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last**

day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:24-40)

Comment: Note well that Jesus emphasizes the necessity of partaking of the “meat which endureth unto everlasting life” more than the “meat which perisheth.” Jesus also relates that He is, in fact, “the bread of life.” Accordingly, SPIRITUAL FOOD IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN PHYSICAL FOOD! JESUS CHRIST IS HIMSELF THE SPIRITUAL FOOD, WHO ALONE SATISFIES SPIRITUAL HUNGER AND THIRST! Observe that it is by BELIEVING ON THE SON OF GOD, JESUS CHRIST, THAT ONE PARTAKES OF THE BREAD OF GOD, WHO IS THE BREAD OF LIFE. JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS SAVIOR AND LORD, IS THE BREAD OF LIFE!

Jesus says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” (John 6:47-58)

Comment: The Lord Jesus again emphasizes the fact that He is the “bread of life”, which must be eaten. However, Jesus is NOT speaking of cannibalism, or of the Lord’s Supper (since it had not yet been instituted). Rather, Jesus speaks of believing on Him, that is, SPIRITUALLY EATING HIM BY HAVING FAITH IN HIM, because He is the living bread from heaven who gives life, for He clearly comments in John 6:63, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world, when His body was nailed to the tree of the cross and His holy and precious blood flowed from His pierced hands, feet and side. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.” (1 Peter 1:18-21)

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” (Isaiah 55:1-3)

Comment: Observe the prophet Isaiah speaks of the eating and drinking of that which satisfies and gives life to the soul, by HEARING the Lord’s everlasting covenant, “the sure mercies of David”— the Gospel of

*Jesus Christ! Yes, Jesus Christ is He, who came from David's line, according to the flesh; while Jesus Christ is also begotten of God the Father, from eternity! Accordingly, in Romans 1:1-4 we note: "the gospel of God," is that, "(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Oh beloved, Jesus died for our sins; yea, the sins of the whole world! OUR OWN WORKS DO NOT AND CANNOT SAVE US, in whole or even in the least part, for Holy Writ relates in no uncertain terms: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:19-26) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) **THUS, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AS ONE'S SAVIOR AND LORD, IS A NECESSITY IF ONE WOULD BE SAVED! JESUS IS THE SPIRITUAL FOOD THAT MUST BE SPIRITUALLY EATEN IF ONE WOULD BE SAVED!** Yes, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36)*

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Comment: Note well that even in Old Testament times the spiritual eating and drinking of Christ Jesus was necessary if folks would be saved! Indeed, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AS ONE'S SAVIOR AND LORD, HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE ONLY WAY TO BE SAVED! JESUS CHRIST IS, AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN, THE REAL SPIRITUAL FOOD— "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go

out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.” (Luke 14:15-24)

Comment: In the parable of the great supper, Jesus teaches that it is an absolute necessity to eat the spiritual food which He, Himself, is. JESUS MUST BE SPIRITUALLY EATEN BY HAVING FAITH IN HIM! Everyone who rejects the Gospel invitation will finally have their hearts hardened and will no longer be able to come to faith in Christ; the Lord will leave them in their sins. It's as Holy Writ relates: “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” (Hebrews 3:7-19)

Therefore, in view of the truths set forth in the Holy Scriptures which we've considered, let each and every one of us rightly value **the food that matters most— real spiritual food**. THAT IS, ABOVE ALL ELSE, LET US VALUE OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS THE BREAD OF LIFE, which we receive by God-given faith in Him: faith wrought and sustained in us by God the Holy Ghost, as He works through His holy Word— the LAW showing us our sins and the GOSPEL OF CHRIST showing us our only Savior from sin. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Let us continue to regularly feed on Jesus Christ by abiding in His Holy Word, for it is written, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

m.e.l.