

Midweek Lenten Vespers #4  
St. John 6:36-51  
April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

### This Is the Will of My Father

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### **Sermon Text:**

“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise Him up at the last day.”

#### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, the will of the heavenly Father is that we believe on the Lord + Jesus, the Christ, so that we may have eternal life with Him. This is the very reason why the Lord + Jesus was sent by the heavenly Father to become a man like us. He was sent so that we might have something—someone—in which to place our trust. We trust in the Lord + Jesus. We believe on the Lord + Jesus. Our faith clings to the Lord + Jesus. This is the will of the Father. He desires that all men be saved. It is only faith in the Christ that saves us. Only through faith in the Lord + Jesus are we justified. For faith clings to all that the Lord + Jesus has done for us. It clings to His promises that He has made.

The promise which our Lord + Jesus makes today in the Gospel reading is that all those who the Father draws to faith in His Son by the work of the Holy Ghost shall inherit eternal life. As we learn and confess in the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther, there is eternal life and salvation wherever there is the forgiveness of sins. Our Lord + Jesus won for us the forgiveness of sins by His perfect fulfilling of the Law and will of the Lord God, and by His propitiatory sacrifice for us upon the tree of the holy cross. There He won for us the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. These gifts are given to us through the Gospel and the Sacraments. Wherever the pure preaching of the Gospel exists, and the Blessed Sacraments are distributed according to the Christ's institution and command, there the promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation are give to those who participate in these things and in faith believe that they receive these gifts by them.

This is all the will of the heavenly Father. This is why the Lord + Jesus has become man. This is why we have been drawn in faith to the Lord + Jesus by the work of the Holy Ghost. All of this is to bring us into our eternal home in Heaven. There, our Lord + Jesus will raise us up on the Last Day and give us, and all those who have gone before us in the faith, new and glorious bodies. We will live with the whole company of Heaven forever and ever, singing eternally the liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom which has no end. We will praise, honor, and worship our Savior for all eternity. For He has called us out of the kingdom of the devil—the kingdom of death—into His Kingdom of life everlasting.

This is why these words of the Lord + Jesus from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John are meant to be taken figuratively. The Lord + Jesus when He says that these gifts will be for all those who eat His flesh is referring to a spiritual eating. This is not the eating and drinking that takes place during the Sacrament of the Altar. This is why the people of Capernaum misunderstood these words. For they understood them literally. The Lord here in St. John chapter six is speaking figuratively. This is why we know that this eating mentioned in this chapter is a spiritual eating. A spiritual eating of the Lord's flesh is one of faith. By faith, we eat the flesh of the Christ. That is, we cling to His and His sacrifice for us. This type of eating—the spiritual eating done by faith—can be done at any time. Whenever we are burdened by our sins, and we cling to the mercies of the Lord + Jesus, we are spiritually eating the flesh of the Christ, for we are clinging to Him in faith.

We know that this type of eating—a spiritual eating of the flesh of Christ—is meant here, because these words of St. John chapter six are figurative language. The Lord is using a metaphor. Just like when He says, "I AM the Lamb of God" or "I AM the Light of the world" or "I AM the vine" and other such instances where our Lord uses figurative language to Who He is. He uses earthly terms to describe heavenly realities so that we may understand them. This is why the disciples who stopped following Him after this conversation do not say, "This is hard to understand," but "This is hard to hear." They understood, but did not accept His teaching. These words can only be accepted by faith. For faith hears and understands that the Lord here is talking about the will of the heavenly Father. That all those who cling in faith the Lord + Jesus will have eternal life. All those who spiritually eat of the flesh of the Christ, are those who cling in faith to Him.

That these words are figurative is why we as Lutherans differentiate between the words here and the Words of Institution, the *Verba Domini*. The words of St. John chapter six are figurative words. They refer to the spiritual eating of the flesh of Christ, that is, to the clinging in faith to the Christ for forgiveness, life, and salvation. The Words of Institution, however, are to be taken literally, not figuratively. The Lord is clearly using figuratively language in St. John chapter six, because He is using symbolism, a figure to represent something else. The Words of Institution, however, cannot be understood in any other way than literal. For, the Lord + Jesus in the Words of Institution uses the word "is." "This IS My Body." "This IS My Blood." We are eating and drinking the Lord's true and substantial Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine.

The eating and drinking done in the Lord's Supper is neither a natural, or physical, eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of the Christ, as the people of Capernaum thought (what we refer to as "Capernaitic eating and drinking"). Nor is the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper an eating and drinking of a spiritual nature only, that is, one that is done by faith. The eating and drinking in the Sacrament of the Altar is a sacramental eating and drinking. Sacramental eating and drinking is that by which, in virtue of Christ's institution, in one undivided sacrament, the bread and the Body of Christ and the wine and the Blood of the Christ are eaten and drank at the same time with the mouth, through and on account of the sacramental union of the earthly and heavenly elements in the Lord's Supper.

Our Lord + Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, gives us His true and substantial Body and Blood for the remission of our sins. This meal is meant for us, so that our weak faith may be strengthened and renewed by the Holy Ghost. Our faith clings to the Words of Institution and believes that we receive exactly what our Lord promises us. We receive the remission of our sins.

This is the will of the heavenly Father. It is His will that mankind, through faith, are justified, and by justification receive the forgiveness of their sins, so that they may also receive eternal life and salvation. This is why the Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven and took upon Himself our flesh. He came to win for us the means whereby we may receive from Him the remission of all our sins. He is indeed the Bread which came down from Heaven. For it is this Bread which we eat by faith. By faith we cling to Him and His works and merits on our behalf. The Israelites in the wilderness wandering for forty

years ate manna. Another kind of bread from Heaven. They ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died in the wilderness.

Manna, the bread from Heaven, is the figure that the Lord is using in the sixth chapter of St. John to compare to Himself. He came down from Heaven also. He is the true Bread. If we by faith eat Him, we shall never taste death. This Gospel reading for this evening is a continuation of the Gospel we heard on Sunday, the Feeding of the Five Thousand. By that miraculous feeding the men of Israel saw a connection between the bread and fish they received from the Lord + Jesus, and the manna that was given to their ancestors in the wilderness. Jesus uses this opportunity to make a point about Himself. Those who eat natural food will eventually die. But those who eat the true Bread, who by faith eat the Lord + Jesus, that is, those who cling to Him in faith, shall never die. For this is the will of the Father that all mankind might cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus to the salvation of their souls.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us boldly cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus, for He is the true Bread come down from Heaven. If we eat of Him we will have eternal life, that is, if we have faith in Him, we will have eternal life. He has come for this very reason. He has come to give us something—someone—to place our trust in, so that the heavenly Father's will is accomplished; that we may live with Him in Heaven forever in new and glorious bodies after our Lord + Jesus raises us out of death into eternal life. This faith is not something that we have to drum up inside of ourselves, nor create somehow by ourselves, but faith is created and renewed and strengthened and preserved in us by the work of the Holy Ghost. He works through the Gospel and the Sacraments to implant faith in us, so that we may cling to our Savior, and rejoice that forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation are ours forever and ever. Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*