

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
June 5, 2016

Bread of Life
John 6:48-57

6:48 “I am the bread of life.

6:49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

6:50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

6:52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

6:53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

6:54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

6:55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

6:56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

6:57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.”

1. The Origin of the Lord’s Supper

Early Church had kept the Lord’s Supper as an important sacrament. In Acts 2:42, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” This “breaking of bread” is this Lord’s Supper. In Acts 20:7, it says “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, ...” We can tell that the Lord’s Supper has been kept every Sunday.

Why have Christians kept the Lord's Supper faithfully? Because the Lord himself established this sacrament. Lord Jesus did not give the detailed rules to local churches, instead he left many things to the apostles. Later, in addition to the apostles, many positions such as prophets, evangelist, pastors, teachers, bishop, and elders were introduced to church administration. These people have established the way of worship by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, the Lord's Supper is not the invention of the early Christianity's progress. It has been established by Lord Jesus before the church's birth on Pentecost. The church has kept what the Lord gave us.

Apostle Paul mentioned about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23, and wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," He wrote as if he was at the Last Supper with other apostles. He became a Christian later so that he did not receive the bread and wine from the Lord himself. However, he was sure that the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, which was delivered by the apostles, came from Lord Jesus himself. Therefore, Paul described the Lord's Supper as what Lord gave us.

Over the summer in Japan, many and various festivals and celebrations will take place. When they are seen on TV, the MC always says "This festival has been kept for this long following the tradition." Every time I hear this, I would like to say "We have kept the Lord's Supper for more than two thousand years!" People have kept what the people established for more than hundreds years, and they recognize it as valuable. Christians shall observe the Lord's Supper, which has been established by the Lord faithfully. We don't want to observe the Lord's Supper because the church decided to do

but we would like to observe it because this is what Lord gave us. We would like to continue to keep it faithfully.

2. The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

We received the Lord's Supper from the Lord himself. If so, we have to recognize the reason why the Lord gave it to us. What message does He want to tell us, and how shall we answer it? We have to know the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and observe it. When we address the Supper, 1 Corinthians 11: 27, says, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord." The word here, "unworthy," includes that you just eat bread and drink a cup, rather than meditating what the meaning of it is, or answering the calling by your faith.

In the early years of Church, the warning of 1 Corinthians 11:27 was already spoken. That means; people, even though they were Christians, may have been negligent and impassible over the holy thing. We shall receive the deep meaning and contents of the Lord's Supper from God, and taste them, to repossess the sense for the holy existence.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke maintained the passages that Lord mandated the Supper. John, however, did not. The Gospel of John described that the Lord washed the feet of disciples, and his teachings and prayer for the disciples were notated. Then, did John not care about the importance of the Lord's Supper? Not absolutely. When John wrote the gospel, the Lord's Supper was already recognized as the forefront of worship; even so, however, when the establishment of

something was achieved, then is formalized without mindfulness, like anything other does. People just follow the form and not think about it. There was the possibility over the Lord's Supper, too. That's why John prioritized the meaning of the Lord's Supper than addressing the establishment, and marked today's verse, "I am the bread of life." From this verse, we shall know the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and answer what the Lord's Supper wills us through it.

3. The Mystery of the Lord's Supper

John Chapter 6 describes the Miracle of Bread, which the Lord fed a large number of crowds with a few loaf of bread. This miracle is written in all four Gospels, but John describes it in most detail. In John, there is even a description of the argument between Lord Jesus and Jews after the Miracle of Bread took place.

The argument started when Lord Jesus said "I am the bread of life." When Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day," people exploded the anger. It is dreadful to imagine eating human flesh and drinking blood. I understand why people exploded the anger. Then, why did Lord Jesus use these extreme words? What was his intension?

That was because the Jewish people who were satisfied with the miracle were trying to make Him a king. People were trying to put Him up as their king and stand against Roman Empire and win independence. They probably thought that Jesus could lead them to victory with miracles even if they would end up besieging. However,

that was not what Jesus wanted to do, which was to save people's soul. Lord Jesus did not come to this world to save Jews politically. He came to this world to save everyone, including Jews, from sins, and to do so, He gave His body and shed blood. Therefore, to eat His flesh and drink his blood means to believe Lord Jesus Christ, accept him, and follow him, who gave the body to save people from sins, cleans their sins, and make them alive. Lord Jesus intentionally used harsh words and pointed out the mistake of Jews, who did not understand his purpose as Savior and tried to plot to use him to benefit themselves.

It is surprising that Jews, who were called "God's people", did not understand the true purpose of His coming to this world, but so many people today don't understand Lord Jesus correctly and put Him in their own favorite image. Most of Japanese living in US never say they hate Christianity. Even if they don't have accurate knowledge about Jesus, they respect him as a great person. They think favorable of Christianity and don't mind coming to church. However, the subject of life is "them" and they use Jesus, Christianity and church to help them achieve their goals and obtain self-realization. It is sad that people don't understand Jesus correctly.

People don't know what they are unless they know Jesus and they cannot find the purpose of their life unless they know why Jesus came to this world. Faith begins when they know that Jesus came to this world to forgive sins and make people alive. The life of those who know Jesus Christ and believe in Him will be changed from the self-centric one to the life dedicated to others. By assisted to live through the life of Lord Jesus, they get to know the meaning of Jesus' word, "I

am the bread of life.”

Japanese people say “*Ita-daki-masu*” before meal and thank for their foods. All the foods had a life. We receive the life and maintain our life. The word “*Ita-daki-masu*” means I receive the life. Christians receive the life of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for all the people and are allowed to live. The Lord’s Supper makes us see the mystery of salvation. As Galatians 2:20 says “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,” the Lord’s Supper allows us to experience the mystery of faith.

It is not enough to understand the meaning of “Christ died on the cross to make me alive”, and “I am allowed to live by Christ for Christ.” Even we call Jesus our Lord, we often make ourselves lords and kings in our daily life. Therefore, we have to repeat eating Lord Jesus the bread of life, just as we cook dinner and eat every day for maintaining our life.

The word “eat” in Greek used in John Chapter 6 is a different word used elsewhere. This “eat” refers to the way animals nibble at food. This is a pretty realistic word. The reason why this word was used is that the relationship between Jesus and believers should not end up just understanding Jesus in the brain and accepting him only with sentiment. To eat Lord Jesus means to deepen the relationship between Lord Jesus and us, to take time to appreciate His grace. It means even if we commit sins, we pray for His forgiveness. It means even if we give in to our weakness, we fight against our unfaithfulness and come closer to the Lord. Those who believe in Jesus should eat Lord Jesus, who gave himself as true food, chew and digest and make faith work in our daily life.

In the Lord's Supper, only a small piece of bread is served, but in fact, we receive much bigger bread with a small piece of bread. That is Jesus Christ. In the Lord Supper, let's make ourselves nourished our life of faith through Lord Jesus who is the bread of life.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, you provided us with the Lord's Supper through Your Son Jesus Christ. Please help us understand the meaning of His words, "I am the bread of life ... whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me." Please make us alive through the Lord's Supper and lead us into a new month so that we can live for the Lord. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.