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The Gospel According to John / John 6:52–71; Psalm 42:1–6a

1. A personal and daily act of feeding on Christ
 2. The people's response to Christ's words of eternal life
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Introduction

In the second to the last sermon, we already tried to look at the overarching message of Christ's discourse in John 6:35-71—the sovereignty of God and man's inability to come to faith in Christ, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the benefit of coming to him in faith. Nevertheless, there are always some things to go back to in this passage, to clarify, to reflect upon, and to apply to ourselves. Truths and principles that will both challenge us and edify us as listeners of God's Word.

Now, this morning, I'd like us to once again look at the remaining discourse and narrative in verses 52-71. And we'll reflect specifically on two highlights:

1. A personal and daily of feeding on Christ
2. The people's response to the words of eternal life.

So let's go through the narrative and the discourse of Christ...

POINT 1. A personal and daily act of feeding on Christ (vv. 52-59)

John 6:52–56: "The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 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. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

It is necessary to remind ourselves what Christ means by the words that he kept on saying.

- When Christ mentions the **“flesh and blood”** of the Son of Man, he’s pointing to the bloody sacrifice of his body on the cross. It was the point of his ministry when he paid for our sins and received God’s wrath for our sake through the hands of the Roman soldiers. It points to his atoning work as the Lamb of God—echoing the words of John the Baptist, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*
- At the same time, when Christ mentions **“eating and drinking”** his flesh and blood, he’s talking about the act of receiving Christ and his atoning work by faith. It’s not literal eating and drinking Christ’s literal body and blood. If we compare verse 54 with verse 40, it has the same effect and promise of eternal life. So “eating and drinking” is “looking on the Son and believing in him.” Tinatanggap mo at inaangkin mo si Cristo at ang Kanyang mga ginawa para sa’yo.

This immediately affirms to us that faith in Christ and his atoning work is necessary for our salvation. Saving faith is never a blind faith. You cannot be saved unless you understand and you believe what Christ has done especially on the cross.

Now, in addition, there are at least two realities of faith that we need to reflect upon here.

1.) **First**, true faith is a **personal** act of believing and accepting Christ.

Although Christ’s audience here is the crowd, and he’s addressing them in plural “you”—he says, (v. 51) *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If **anyone** eats of this bread, he will live forever.”*

(v. 54) **“Whoever** feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life...
(v. 56) **Whoever** feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

So we learn at least here that faith in Christ and his atoning work is a personal act. No one can eat and drink for you or me. Kahit pwedeng may mag-subo sa’yo ng pag-kain, ikaw pa rin ang dapat ngumuya at lumunok no’n.

Hence, no one can repent and believe for you and me.

This is important especially for us who have family members that are Christians. Not because our husband or our wife is a Christian means

we're already right with God and have a ticket to heaven.

May mga taong gano'n ang thinking. Ayaw sumama sa church, sasabihin sa asawa, "Support kita dyan. Ilapit mo na lang ako sa Diyos."

Especially for you children, you may have the privilege of having believing parents. But they cannot repent and believe of you. All that they can do is point you to Christ. But you must know Christ for yourself.

I myself, you yourself—as an individual—must listen, understand, repent, and believe in Christ to be saved.

2.) **Second**, Christ's words imply that true faith is a **daily** act of feeding on Christ

Christ says, "*Whoever **feeds** on my flesh and **drinks** on my blood has eternal life...*" not "*Whoever has fed and drank on me...*"

Even in physical food, we need food every day, not once a week or once a month or once a year. But regularly, every day. In the same manner, we need to feed on Christ by faith every day, as much as possible. That's how we continually abide in Christ, as he said in **verse 56**: "*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*" Christ will say more about abiding in him especially in chapter 15. But at least here, we learn that to continue in our union with Christ is to continually exercise faith in him.

Yes, there's a single point of time when sinner is regenerated and converted to Christ. Whenever a person feels his own guilt and sinfulness, lays hold of Christ, and trusts in his finished work—at once, that person "eats the flesh of the Son of man, and drinks his blood." And the person is already justified by that act of faith.

But as Christians, we don't only believe once during our conversion. We believe and keep on believing. Not because justification is being lost and we need to exercise the same kind of faith when we were converted.

Rather, as Christians, we exercise faith in Christ as the very essence of our life. **The Christian faith is a life of faith.** Paul expresses this in Galatians 2:20, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

This is a good reminder to us, brothers and sisters. As Christians and

pilgrims on the way to eternity, we encounter so many things that make it necessary to keep exercising faith in Christ and his atoning work. Every day and every week, we still fight and struggle with temptations to sin. Kailangan natin na laging maalala at maniwala na si Cristo na ang nagdala ng ating mga kasalanan sa kamatayan. And as Paul said, we consider ourselves already dead to sin and alive to God. Hindi natin 'to lagi at automatic na naiisip kapag nandyan na mismo 'yong temptation. We need to actively exercise faith in Christ.

Every day and every week, maraming times na nagkakasala pa rin tayo, naaalala natin 'yong mga kasalanan natin before, at iba't-iba pang mga kahinaan natin bilang mga tao. If we do not keep feeding ourselves of Christ and his finished work (i.e., atonement paid in full, sacrifice once and for all)—we'll only grow wearier and weaker in our Christian life.

I also observed this in myself before. Kapag may malaking disappointment or discouragement sa buhay, nando'n 'yong temptation to just escape reality. Pupunta ka sa medyo isolated na lugar, na maganda 'yong nature sa paligid. Manonood ka ng maraming "funny videos" para gumaan 'yong pakiramdam mo. But even after all of this, at the end of the day—as a Christian, you'll know and feel within that there's still something else you desperately need.

Like the Psalmist in Psalm 42, your soul will keep panting and thirsting for God.

You'll never have that sense of peace, hope, and strength until you remind yourself again of who Christ is and has done on your behalf. Kaya nga malaking biyaya ng Diyos every time we gather regularly every Lord's Day, every time we witness and partake the sacraments, and every time we read our Bibles and pray in our own personal times throughout the week.

Abide in Christ by continually knowing him and believing him. Trust him and keep trusting him and his finished work on the cross.

And let Christ strengthen us, nourish us, and refresh us in this long and winding pilgrimage toward eternity.

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In verses 57-58, Christ repeats the same thing as if to put a conclusion to his discourse on the "Bread of Life." The point is: Christ is the true and living bread. Whoever feeds on him will live forever.

John 6:59, "Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum."

[TRANSITION]

Now, as usual in the gospel narratives, the gospel authors do not only tell us about Christ and his words, but also show the people's response to him. Some respond well, others don't. Some believe, others don't. And by looking at their response to Christ, we should also reflect and learn from them. So in verses 60-71, we see...

POINT 2. The people's response to Christ's words of eternal life

Let's read first John 6:60-62

John 6:60–62 ESV

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

Last, last Sunday, I already explained what Christ meant in verse 62. He's basically saying, "Kung ngayon pa lang, nao-offend na kayo—hindi niyo na matanggap 'yong sinasabi ko patungkol sa kin... what if you will see me lifted up on the cross? How much more offended and unbelieving you will be kapag 'yong inaasahan niyo sana na Messiah ay ipapakita sa krus?" Definitely, it will be harder for them to accept.

John 6:63 ESV

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

There are different interpretations for the first statement here. Some suggest that the "flesh is no help at all" refers to the "flesh" stated by Christ in the previous discourse. It should be taken as "the flesh *alone* is no help at all" or "the flesh *alone* counts for nothing." They mean to say that the crucified body of Christ alone is not enough to make salvation yours—**it must be applied by the Spirit**. It is the Spirit who must work

in you to help you understand and embrace Christ's atoning work.

The other suggestion is, the "flesh" here refers to the nature of man. Remember the words of Christ to Nicodemus, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* Hence, Christ must be saying, "The human flesh, the human nature cannot help at all in understanding and embracing these things. It is the Spirit who gives life."

And I think it is this second interpretation that fits the context. Because Christ makes the connection in verse 65, *"This (this grumbling that you have, this failure to believe and come to me)... this is why I told you [in the first place] that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."*

In either case, what is clear is that life comes from the Spirit of God, and the words that Christ is saying are spiritual truths that give life.

Sadly, as Jesus says in **verse 64**, *"But there are some of you who do not believe..."*

Highlight 1: Counterfeit religion

This is the response of the people. And what are we seeing here?

Counterfeit religion. Huwad or hindi totoo na pananampalataya at pagsunod kay Cristo.

Take notice that the people responding to Christ are identified as *"many of his disciples."* They are not the usual "Jews," which refer either to Jewish people in general or to the Jewish authorities, 'yong mga galit talaga kay Cristo at gusto Siyang ipapatay.

These are his disciples. Of course, we have to distinguish them with the original 12 disciples (or the apostles), since in verse 67-69, those 12 remained with Christ.

But nevertheless, these particular people were "once" disciples of Christ. Pag sinabing "disciple," it simply means "student" (someone associated with a "teacher" and his "teachings"). So these disciples have been following Christ, hearing the teachings of Christ, seeing the signs of Christ, and so on.

Yet, they couldn't accept Christ's words. They wouldn't believe. And worse, pagdating sa verse 66, John says, *"... many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him."*

So it turns out: They are not genuine followers of Christ after all. To put it bluntly, not all Israel is true Israel. Not all disciples are true disciples. Not all Christians are true Christians.

Because there are those who are hypocrites and those who believe and follow Christ with the wrong view of Christ or for the wrong reasons.

At ano 'yong specific problem no'ng mga disciples na 'to?

Imply 1: Looking at spiritual truths in a carnal way

They were looking at spiritual truths in a carnal way. *"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"* They cannot accept Christ's words, they cannot bear his teachings. "Eat your flesh? Drink your blood? That's what will give us eternal life?"

Kung tutuusin, mahirap naman talaga unawain 'yong sinasabi ni Cristo. Kung ilalagay din natin posisyon natin sa kanila, by ourselves, hindi rin natin maiintindihan agad 'yon. Kahit hanggang ngayon nga, maraming mga mysteries at portions ng Scriptures na hindi natin fully ma-grasp.

Pero hindi porket mahirap maintindihan 'yong mga salita ni Cristo eh ibig sabihin hindi 'yon totoo—na tipong tatalikuran na lang nila si Cristo, na tipong magco-conclude na sila na hindi Siya 'yong Messias na dapat nilang sundin.

Even in our case, God's Word proclaims truths that are hard to understand or contrary to human reason. Think about Christ's incarnation; God the Son atoning for others; the resurrection of Christ from the dead. How could an eternal God assume the flesh and become man, fully God and fully man? How could an almighty and just God suffer in the hands of men and pay for the sin of others? These are but some of the scandalous and shocking truths for many people.

But if we will find any difficulty in understanding and agreeing with Scriptures, if there will be something contrary to our natural reason—the problem is not with God or the truth of God, but us. God never lies. The problem lies in our biases, weaknesses, and limits.

So when God tells us something in his Word, we ultimately **accept it by faith**. Kahit hindi man natin fully ma-grasp sa utak natin sa simula, we can ask God, "Lord, give me more understanding. Hindi ko man ma-gets right now, maybe later on, you'll make it clear. I'll keep listening. Help me keep growing."

'Yon ang isang way na makikita mo 'yong difference between false believers and genuine believers. 'Yong mga false believers, as long as mag-me-make-sense sa kanila 'yong pinapahayag ng Salita ng Diyos, as long as they will agree with the teachings—they will believe. Pero kung hindi sila agree, they'll go away, they won't believe. Genuine believers, however, by faith they take God's Word as true and reliable.

In the case of the disciples here who turned their backs on Christ—their unbelief only proved that they are not true believers after all. (cf. 1 John 2:19, "... *But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*")

And, friends, God is not surprised...

Imply 2: God knows who are the true believers

Tayo nagugulat kapag may kakilala tayo na Christian, lumaki sa church, very well-versed pagdating sa theology, tapos mababalitaan mo nag-backslide. Hindi na uma-attend sa church, nahulog sa matinding kasalanan, and so on. Of course, we don't know exactly kung mag-repent pa ba sila at mare-restore. Pero nakakagulat at nakakalungkot 'yon.

The same thing here, what a surprise that they were once following Christ but then they turned back and no longer walked with him.

But in respect to God, he's not surprised. He's not shocked or troubled by it.

Why? John 6:64, When Christ said, "*But there are some of you who do not believe...*" John adds this commentary: "*(For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)*"

God knows who are the true believers and disciples. Nothing is hidden from the God who sees the very depths of our hearts.

Fear for hypocrites

This is actually a reason for fear for the hypocrites. People may not see everything in our hearts; our fellow church members may not see us in private. But God sees. We may appear a Christians, well-versed in the faith, always present in church, active in ministry, and so on—but God knows whether we truly believe Christ and follow him. Sa harapan ng tao, pwede tayo mag-panggap na tayo ay isang Kristiyano, pero hindi tayo

makakapag-panggap sa harapan ng Diyos.

Comfort for true believers

On the other hand, this gives comfort to true believers. It is a reality that there are believers who have a strong faith and a weak faith. At pwedeng tayo ay Kristiyano na tunay na nagsisisi at kinikilala ang pagiging makasalanang natin, at lubos na nagtitiwala at nagmamahal kay Cristo—pero hindi sobrang obvious sa maraming tao. Perhaps, our family knows we are a Christian kasi nakikita nila especially in private. But others doubt it—kasi hindi natin ma-articulate nang husto 'yong faith natin katulad ni so and so, kasi simple lang 'yong service na ginagawa natin, kasi tahimik lang tayo na tao, and so on.

Well, God sees the state of our hearts. God knows if Christ is the object of our faith and hope in life.

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Again, God knows who are the true believers and false believers. And God will have it revealed and proven over time. That's why, ultimately, what these false disciples need is a new heart from God. If we are hypocrites, Christ himself said, "You must be born again!"

Ang tunay na pananampalataya kay Cristo na nagdudulot ng kaligtasan ay hindi isang bagay na kaya natin na subukan on your own (i.e., just try harder to believe) o isang bagay na kaya nating gayahin (imitate)... It is from God. And **when God himself works in the sinner's heart, it will never be a false faith. It may be a weak faith, but never false.**

Highlight 2: Profession of faith ("To whom shall we go?")

Now, going back to our narrative, verse 66 again says that many of this disciples (who turned out to be false disciples) turned back and no longer walked with him.

John 6:67, *"So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?""*

Christ asks this not to make sure if they will stay, as if he's afraid to lose them. Na parang sa drama lang, "liwan niyo rin ba ako?" No. Again, Christ already know who are his true redeemed people and followers.

Rather, Christ asks them to challenge them on what they truly believe. May times talaga na ang Diyos mismo ang nagte-test ng faith natin na mga Christians. Not in order to make us fail. But to affirm in us his work of salvation. Mas pinapalitaw Niya 'yong faith natin at convictions natin, para makita natin kung saan pa tayo mahina at gayo'n din ay para mas lalo Niyang palalakasin 'to.

So Christ challenges the disciples, "What do you think? Do you want to go away as well?"

John 6:68-69, as usual, ang laging nasa pronta at tumatayong representative no'ng 12, *"Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believed and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."*

Then, Christ responds...

John 6:70-71

John 6:70-71 ESV

Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Bago tayo mag-reflect do'n sa response ni Peter, unahin natin 'tong kay Judas—which is related to the false faith of the other disciples in verses 60-66.

Jesus said, "Did I not chose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." Just by reading this, pwede nating maisip, paano 'yon, pinili ni Cristo pero "devil?"

The term devil does not mean literally Judas is Satan. Elsewhere, no'ng sinabi rin Peter na hindi dapat mamatay si Christ, Jesus told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" Apparently, Christ uses the term to show how Satan—the ultimate deceiver and enemy—uses human instruments to try to destroy God's plan. Hindi naman bago 'yon kasi kahit sa Garden of Eden, Satan also used the serpent to tempt Adam and Eve.

But still, bakit pinili ni Cristo si Judas na maging part no'ng 12 disciples, tapos eventually ipagkakanulo pala niya si Cristo sa John 18 at magpapakamatay? Why choose someone who will soon prove to be an unbeliever and a traitor?

The sovereignty of God in Judas Iscariot

Well, dito natin makikita 'yong mystery ng sovereignty ng Diyos at responsibility ng tao. Definitely, Christ didn't choose Judas *in order* to become a traitor. It's not as if inosente si Judas, tapos ginawa lang siyang masama ni Christ. Like any of us, Judas was born in sin. Elsewhere, he's called "a thief."

But in the sovereignty of God, he used Judas to fulfill his redemptive plan and promises. Through Judas, God fulfilled the prophecy that the Son of Man will be betrayed by his own friend and be put to death.

Joseph told his brothers, who sold him to Egypt, "*You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*" Yes, Judas eventually carried out his evil plan, but God meant it for good. It was part of the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (as Peter puts it in Acts 2:23).

The little benefit of religious privileges of Judas

In any case, one reality that we can reflect on Judas is **how little benefit religious privileges can give to a person without the saving grace of God.**

Kung mayro'n mang isang tao na napakaraming privileges and opportunities patungo sa kaligtasan, pwedeng si Judas 'yon. Nakasama niya si Cristo for 3 years, narinig niya si Cristo, nakita niya mga himala ni Cristo, naging involve at nag-contribute pa siya sa ministry kasama 'yong 11 apostles. Kasama siya do'n sa mga nakapag-cast out din ng demons at nakapag-preach ng gospel.

Yet still, he never possessed the inward saving grace of God. He was never born again.

You see, friends, it is neither place, nor fellowship, nor opportunities, nor religious activities that man needs to become a Christian. What a person needs to be a Christian is grace, the gracious work of God.

Take note: One can be religious, but not spiritual. Pwedeng lagi tayong nasa church, active tayo sa ministry, pero karnal pa rin tayo mag-isip at mamuhay. In fact, one can partake of the means of grace yet only eternally but not internally. Naririnig natin at naiintindihan natin intellectually 'yong Salita ng Diyos, pero hindi naitatanim sa puso, walang transformation sa puso at buhay.

And similar with what I mentioned earlier concerning the false disciples, the case of Judas clearly shows us that what you and I ultimately need is a new heart. God must work within us so that when we partake of God's

means of grace—we're not only religious externally, but filled with the Spirit of God, living a true spiritual life.

That is what we should long and pray for.

Now, let us end with the response of Peter and the rest of the apostles...

The response of faith by Peter and the other apostles

John 6:68–69, Simon Peter said, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”*

More likely than not, by this time, hindi rin naman lubusang naunawaan no'ng 12 disciples 'yong mga sinabi ni Christ concerning himself as the “bread of life.” May mga portions in the book of John na sinasabi no'ng author na later on na lang nila naintindihan 'yong sinabi ni Christ after ng Kanyang death and resurrection.

For instance, in John 2:22, when Christ spoke about destroying the temple and raising it up in 3 days, sabi do'n *“When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”*

So we can assume that in one degree or another, they didn't fully understand the discourse of Christ. Nevertheless, through the work of the Spirit, Peter and the apostles put their faith in Christ. They acknowledge that only Christ has the words that will give them eternal life.

Apply: Don't turn away from God's Word even when it's hard to understand

Friends, this is an encouragement for us not to turn away from God even when there are some truths that are hard to understand.

The Word of God *alone* gives us truths that lead to eternal life. Kung ikukumpara mo 'yong Bible sa ibang mga literatures, 'yong Bible ang tanging magbibigay ng malinaw at consistent na view patungkol sa reyalidad ng Diyos, ng mundo, ng tao, ng kasalanan, ng kaligtasan, at reyalidad ng susunod na buhay.

ILLUSTRATE: I remember in the past, I heard about an associate of Ravi Zacharias who converted from Islam to Christianity, at tinanong siya anong difference. May nabanggit siya na pag mag-babasa ka ng Quran

('yong parang Bible ng Islam), there's only principles, rules, and commands. Wala sense of hope and peace. Pero sa Bible, its full of God's comforting words and promises for sinners.

And that's true! Bagama't pinapakita ng Salita ng Diyos 'yong ating pagiging ganap na makasalanan at kawalan ng pag-asa sa ating sarili, malinaw na pinapahayag nito ang biyaya ng Diyos at ganap na pag-asa natin ng kaligtasan na naka-Cristo. Malinaw na pinapahayag satin na kay Cristo, tayo'y may kapatawaran ng lahat ng kasalanan, katuwiran sa harapan ng Diyos, at buhay na walang hanggan.

Don't turn aside from God's Word, don't turn aside from the gospel.

Apply: Don't look for something else outside Christ

In fact, don't even try to look for something else outside Christ. As Peter said, *"to whom shall we go... we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."* He's the holy one, the one whom God has set apart as the Messiah, as our Savior and Lord.

Even as Christians, there will be times when we get tempted to give up our faith and go back to the world. May mga times na nahihirapan tayo sumunod kay Cristo sa panahon ng pag-subok. May mga times na napapagod tayo sa nakikipag-laban sa kasalanan. May mga times na nape-pressure tayo kapag 'yong mga mahal natin sa buhay o mga tao sa paligid natin eh kinukutya tayo dahil sa'ting pananampalataya.

But this is something we should ask ourselves, "To whom shall we go?"

To the fleeting passions and enjoyments of this world? Are we better off without Christ, without the Savior who loved us and died for us, and still loves us yesterday, today, and forever?

No, brothers and sisters. We can never be better by turning away from Christ and looking for something or someone else.

So by the help of God, let us hold fast our confession, trusting and hoping in Christ and in Christ alone.

Amen.