

**John 6:41-51**

I would imagine that there are few of us who do not enjoy eating. In fact, we enjoy it so much that we make a habit of it. But as much as we enjoy eating food that we like, we also enjoy grumbling about food that we don't like. "It's too tough...too hot...too cold...it's undercooked...it's overcooked." We'll all eat food that we don't necessarily enjoy as long as we are able to grumble about it. The irony of it is that the very food we grumble about is giving to us the vitamins and nutrients we need.

This is the truth not just with regard to food for our bodies but food for our souls as well. The very first words of our Gospel reading for today in John 6 tell us that the Jews began to grumble. Were they grumbling about food for their bodies? No, they were quite content when Jesus fed them fish and bread up on the mountainside. They were grumbling about spiritual food. They were grumbling about Jesus and His words.

This should be no surprise to us. Last Sunday our Old Testament lesson told us that the Children of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the desert. It was in the nature of these Jews, therefore, to grumble. It was passed on to them from their forefathers. "Our fathers ate manna in the desert," they proudly told Jesus. And yet, those same fathers did not eat their manna quietly. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron as they ate.

Why do people grumble? Why did they and why do we? Isn't it because of our sinful pride? We are never content with what God gives us. We always think we deserve better.

We grumble about the weather. We think we deserve to have rain when we want it, but not too much and never with hail. And we deserve mostly sunny days, but not too hot or humid. We grumble about the weather and yet the very weather we grumble about is used by God to sustain this earth and put food on our tables.

Students grumble about their teachers, and yet teachers are used by God to give them the education they need. Children grumble against their parents. They're too strict; too "old fashioned." And yet, God uses these parents to nurture these grumbling children and provide for them. We grumble about our worship services—too long, too repetitive, too formal, and yet, through these long, repetitive, formal Divine services God blesses us with forgiveness, life, and salvation in Jesus Christ.

I was never so humbled in all my life as when I saw that the Lutheran Christians in Sudan, who have little to nothing, never grumble. And yet, here we have vehicles and good roads to drive them on; we have air conditioning, food that is nutritious; we have closets and dressers stuffed with clothing, and so much more—and we grumble. How shameful is that! Why don't the Lutheran Christians in Sudan grumble? Because they have Jesus Christ and His Word and Sacraments, and they have learned to be content in Him.

"Stop your grumbling," says Jesus. He spoke these words to the Jews, and they are just as much for you and me. We have no right to grumble. Because we are proud, we think that we are deserving; that we are entitled to what is good. But we are evil, and so we deserve that which is evil and not that which is good.

But friend, there is good news for you. Your God is gracious to you. He gives you, not what you deserve—He gives you all good things in Jesus Christ. Even though we grumble, God blesses us. Even though we are never satisfied, God satisfies our needs. Through the very things that we grumble about God gives us what we need. We grumble about food and weather, about parents and teachers, and so much more, and yet God, through these very things, blesses us with what we need.

The Jews in John 6 were grumbling about Jesus and His words. And yet, through those very words of Christ, the Father was drawing sinners to Jesus. “No one can come to Me,” He said, “unless the Father draws Him.” The same is true for us. We grumble about God’s spiritual gifts to us in Christ. We grumble about our church; about pastors and church members; about having to take time to read the Word of God at home and receive that living Word at church. But God is gracious. Through His spiritual gifts in Christ, even though we grumble, He pours out His blessings upon us.

There are many times that you and I have eaten a meal that we did not particularly like. And yet, God used that meal to nourish our bodies. There may have been times when you left a Sunday morning service thinking of all kinds of things that you did not care for in church that day, and yet God, through that Divine service, gave you life and salvation in Jesus Christ.

If He wanted to, God could easily grumble about us—about the way we live for ourselves; about the way we treat each other; about our lack of respect toward Him; about how we grumble against Him. But He doesn’t. Instead, He forgives you. He doesn’t overlook your grumbings, He forgives them—because Jesus, on the cross, was punished for every one of your grumbings. And even though you and I grumble about His Church, within that very Church He draws us to Jesus Christ to receive eternal life.

“To come to Me,” says Jesus, “My Father must draw you.” That word, “draw,” in the Greek refers to fishing—not with a pole, line, and a hook, but with a net. Fishermen back then would cast their nets into the water and draw fish into the boat. And the fish weren’t particularly happy about the net, or the fishermen, or the boat, and yet, they were drawn by means of these things.

God draws us to Christ by the net of His Word. Pastors, Christian parents and teachers all cast out the net of the Word and God does the drawing. He draws us into the boat of His Church. And the whole time He is doing this we fish are grumbling. We grumble about the net, about the fishermen, about the boat. “The net hurts! It’s rubbing me the wrong way! I don’t much care for that parent, or that pastor who threw that net at me.” “The boat is rocking too much.” On and on we grumble, but friend, the whole time God is busy rescuing you, forgiving you, and drawing you to Christ.

Fish don’t come to the fisherman of their own free will, and neither do we. But God, through His Word and Sacraments, draws you to Christ; forgives every one of your sins in Jesus; pardons all of your grumbings; and gives you the gift of heaven. And all of this is yours right now! By the net of His Word He has brought you to Christ, and He sees a net full, not of grumbling fish, but of forgiven sinners. He sees men, women, and children who live in and around Augusta, Missouri for whom Christ died, and He loves you. And no

grumbling of yours can ever prevent Him from giving you every good gift that He has to give, including and especially, life in Jesus Christ.

Friend, because you are drawn to Christ by Water and Word, your Heavenly Father doesn't hear your grumbings or mine. All He hears is the voice of His Son who died for you saying, "Father, forgive them." So go in peace. There is no need for us to grumble. Your gracious God gives you all that you need in Jesus Christ. Amen.