

**John 6:51-58      This is living!**

**<sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”**

<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; <sup>55</sup> for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

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What does it mean for you to 'live life to the full'? People often talk about living life to the full. What are your thoughts on 'living life to the full'?

Most people would say that good health is important for a 'full life'. For many, getting on top of things financially might be a part of 'living life to the full'. For others - sitting on a tropical island beach in the shade of a palm tree could be a high point in 'living life to the full'. For someone else, a full life will include seeing a lot of their family together on a regular basis - enjoying the time shared between them. Then there are some people who are workaholics, who see living 'life to the full' as achieving more in their career - working hours on end with little break or recreation at all.

For some people – 'living life to the full' will mean that they want to include a large range of activities in their life. In some cases, people try extremely hard to pack an enormous amount into their first two or three decades of life, because they are afraid they'll miss out on something important. And so, they have ½ a dozen credit cards filled to the brim with every type of experience that they can squeeze into their daily existence.

When we stop & think about how many good things we can enjoy in life – there's plenty of variety for us to choose from in God's good creation. It all depends on what you see as 'living life to the full'.

Advertising often beckons us to 'live life to the full'. Everywhere we go, we see all sorts of advertisements: catalogues, TV, internet, & shop-signs

everywhere – all to assist/enhance our living experience. All the ads naturally want people to think that their stores have the right products to make you feel like your ‘living life to the full’.

I'm not sure how many of you are into boating, camping or fishing, but most people have heard of the BCF franchise. Many of us have shopped there before. They change their advertising slogans from time to time. Some years ago, there was a strong advertising campaign, with the slogan ... *"BCF – This is living"*. Their ads, first-of-all, showed people watching TV or playing computer games. Then they say, *"That's not living. This is living"*. And then they showed a brand-new boat on the water, then some camping scenes, and then some fishing scenes. Their slogan clearly linked into a very popular ‘getaway’ style of living. Then at the end they said, *"How good is that?"*

Now I don't wish to make any sort of evaluation on BCF - good for them if their slogans work. But the point here is to recognise that the desire to have ‘life to the full’ – is always close to us. Our longing for a full life never quite leaves us. Even when we have achieved a high point in life, it's not long before we soon hunger again for the next opportunity to say, “This is living”. We may not say those exact words, but we do ache for satisfaction & fulfilment in our lives.

And while we hunger for a chance to say, “This is living” - today (in John 6) we hear the Lord Jesus give us a totally different slant on what it means to say “This is living”. Jesus said, “<sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever;**”.

Here, Jesus was offering something much richer & fuller than the average experience. Here, Jesus was talking about a ‘kind of living’ that satisfies for the long-term. Here, Jesus was talking about himself as living bread, who has come to us, to feed us with eternal life.

All the logical questions come up in this text. How does a person eat of Jesus – what does this all mean? It's hard for us to grasp all this when Jesus says, **“Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...”** Jesus gave a short discourse on eating his flesh & drinking his blood in order to be raised to live forever. And while we can't humanly understand all things about holy communion, we do have the promise & blessing of forgiveness as we gather together with Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is a central meal for Christians. We let go of our sins, while Jesus feed us with forgiveness. And whether we have this meal in church on Sunday or whether we organise other places to share this meal, Jesus provides a meal that connects ordinary people with the eternal fellowship of God. I do hope that our infant communion discussions at Synod this year, will also increase our thoughts for meeting people's needs in a more missional way. At hospitals bedsides, at the homes of shut-ins, extended visitors seem to make wise choices when a pastor sets out holy communion with some introduction. Those who have experienced communion will usually join in, while those who don't quite believe, will simply watch & learn. I firmly believe this same approach can go further into our mission circles under the guidance of our pastors. I see good things ahead for the Christian church, if we actively use opportunities to welcome people - to eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of the Son of Man. Obviously, this is just one part of missional thinking, but it may give some people an opportunity to say before God, "This is living – when Jesus first comes right here to me."

And this brings us back to which kind of living is better. We all need a break, we all need to getaway from time to time. But Jesus offers us bread from heaven to live forever. In saying this, Jesus was freeing us from the tiresome pursuit of wanting to feed ourselves with every possible experience here & now. The bread of Jesus brings life that looks beyond itself and gives to others. We are freed from having to keep up with the social pressure to 'get a life', or to 'live the dream' - for in Christ Jesus, there is a fresh new way of life which doesn't run out of steam. To know that we can sit with God & receive his forgiveness – this is what we & others need most of all.

I'm sure all of us enjoy a bit of recreation – maybe even a bit of boating, camping, or fishing, or whatever else helps us relax. But as we consider the eternal life that Jesus has freely given to us, we can always say, "This is living. How good is that?" Amen.