

John 6:51-58
Pentecost 13 B
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August 19, 2018

The Disney Pixar movie “Coco” tells a heartwarming story of the bonds and love of family,

All while painting a fascinating picture of perceived connections between the living and the dead.

In the movie, a 12 year-old boy named Miguel is accidentally transported to the Land of the Dead on Dia de los Muertos,

Or “Day of the Dead”-- a Mexican holiday when family and friends gather to pray for and remember those who have died.

When Miguel arrives in the Land of the Dead,

He stands out because he has on skin.

Everyone else exists in their skeletons--

They are dressed,

They are speaking,

They are interacting with one another,

And with Miguel.

But they have no skin,

No flesh.

Miguel’s flesh is what distinguishes him from the dead.

Without flesh, those in the Land of the Dead are and remain dead.

Our skin,

Our flesh,

Our blood. . .

These cover our bones,

Like in the movie, these mark us as living.

Today Jesus continues to teach about the living bread from heaven--

And he describes this bread as his flesh.

And that changes things up a bit,

Because no longer is it some pleasant conversation that elicits images of an ethereal, fluffy loaf of bread.

Now it's about flesh.

Now it's about something we all have,
Something we all wear.

And something we certainly do not eat.

Flesh is not quite our skin--

It's the layer of soft tissue directly beneath our skin.

Under our skin, flesh is the front line of our bodies.

Our skin and our flesh are the first parts of our bodies that come into contact with the world around us.

Our flesh is therefore pretty vulnerable.

It is through our flesh that we first catch sight of our blood.

And in this,

Besides breathing and heart-beating,

Our *being alive* might most easily be claimed in the fact that we have on flesh.

And Jesus says that, in order to live, we eat his.

And not just eat.

For the majority of our Gospel text this morning,

The Greek word translated as "eat" is actually "chew on."

So Jesus is saying, “Those who chew on my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life.”

Chewing involves doing something with that which is in our mouths.

Tasting it,

 Moving it around,

 Beginning the digestive process.

 Interacting with it.

Jesus is telling us that this is exactly what we are doing with the living bread,

 His very flesh.

In the Eucharist,

 The meal at this Table,

 We chew. . .

 On real bread.

 On a real gift of Jesus’ flesh.

 On the sacrifice of Jesus’ life for us.

And as we chew,

 As our saliva mixes with this bread,

 Jesus’ body mixes with our own.

And we live,

 Because Jesus’ flesh becomes our own,

 Because when our own mortal flesh withers and fades,

 When all that is left of us is a skeleton. . .

 Jesus’ flesh covers and keeps us,

 Giving us life even when we are dead.

This is the kind of stuff that starts making us Christians look kinda weird to others.

It's why we we've been labeled as cannibals by some,
Both in the early days of Christianity and even today.
We eat the flesh of Christ,
And we drink his blood,
And that sounds strange.

But flesh is real.

We all wear it.

Blood is real.

We all bleed it.

Jesus had flesh that was broken and wounded for us.

Jesus had blood that poured out of his flesh for us.

And we don't just talk about his flesh and his blood,

We don't just gaze upon it at this table,

We don't even just touch it,

We eat it.

In no other way can this great gift become so real for us.

We've got to chew & swallow it.

It is only in eating that this sacrifice becomes part of us,

Enters us,

Fills us.

Such that we are no longer left to our own flesh and blood,

Such that we are no longer victims of that which wounds us
or makes us bleed.

Such that the almost involuntary act of chewing
somehow becomes holy.

At one point in "Coco," the people residing in the Land of the
Dead are searching for Miguel,

And the whole land is calling him the "Living Boy"-

“We’re looking for a living boy.

Have you seen a living boy running around?” they ask.

This is what we are--living people,

Living children of God,

Even as we run through this land where Sin stalks us,
And Death sneaks and surprises us.

Have you seen the Living Child of God?

It’s you.

The one over whom Living Water is poured in baptism

Just as it is over Vivien today,

And the Living God enters your heart,

And the Living Christ marks your death,

Transforms your death--into life.

Have you seen the Living Child of God?

It’s you.

The one in whom the Living Bread abides,

As it is eaten and as it fills you.

And the Living God forgives your greatest mistakes,

And the Living Christ sets you free to serve all

those who believe they are stuck in Death.

The promise of Jesus Christ is that we are always in the Land of the Living,

Even when our hearts stop and our flesh fades away.

We are given new flesh,

New hope,
New life.
Through Jesus, the Living Bread,
broken,
poured out,
And fed,
We will never again be known as
“dead.”