

Eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood

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[0 : 00] About this message of scripture together. Lord, your son deserves that people should know and feel and fully acknowledge how great he is.

Please, as we come and look at this part of the Bible, will you show us Christ in his power and glory? Help the speaker, help us as we listen and come by the power of your Holy Spirit upon our assembly now.

We're just sinners with loads of shortcomings, but you are almighty and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Question first of all, real question. What noise does it make when you eat a carrot? Crunchy sort of noise? Sort of chewing? And the word you have for eating something like a carrot is to munch, isn't it?

And in this passage of the Bible, that equivalent word is used for feeding on Christ. And I want so to speak about Christ this morning that we will have this thought that we want to munch on him, to feed on him, to actively draw from him all the goodness and grace and blessings and benefits that he has.

[2 : 09] Okay. This passage has got all these things in it. It's got bread. It's got life.

It's got blood. It's got flesh. It's got drinking blood. It's got eating and feeding and munching. And I tried to make the pictures pop up in order, but I was defeated by it. But we've got bread and blood and meat, flesh. We've got death and we've got drinking blood.

And what it sounds like, eating a person. And I hope we find that rather distasteful because it is distasteful. And when Jesus originally spoke these things, I think people would have got up out of the room and said, I'm not listening to this.

I've had enough of this. And actually the passage that we'll look at next week says, some of the disciples said, I've had enough. I can't take this. Not up for that. Hard sayings.

[3 : 17] So if you've come this morning thinking we'll just have a nice, sing a little comfortable chit chat and that's it, please, you're going to be very disappointed, I hope, because that's not what this is about.

It's a hard saying. And I want to look at it. We're looking particularly at the bit about eating the flesh and drinking the blood. So in two parts.

Negatively, what is it to not have life? And positively, what does it say about getting life? So we'll do it in those two parts. So let's look, first of all, at the negative side of it.

Those of you who know me know I've lost my beloved NIV Bible and I've started working for another one. So I'm going to be looking in two different Bibles at once.

So I'm going to be a little bit slow finding verses. But in verse 60, please have a Bible open in front of you. There's some at the back if you want to. If you haven't brought a Bible with you.

[4 : 17] The disciples say, this is a hard word. Who can accept it? If we've understood it properly, we should say there are some hard things here.

You might not like it. And the thing that I'm going to start off with is part of verse 53 where Jesus says, I tell you the truth unless something, something, something, you have no life in you.

Unless something, something, something, you have no life in you. He begins it by saying truly, truly. Or I tell you the truth.

Da, da, da, no life in you. Amen, amen is what he says in the original. When Jesus says that, we're supposed to sit up and take notice, aren't we? He's saying, come on, this is something important.

Amen, amen. Unless you have, da, da, da, you have no life in you, you are dead. The people listening would have said, come on.

[5 : 31] We're told that they were seeking. You can't do that if you're dead. Verse 26. Doesn't it say they were looking or seeking? You're looking for me? They were active.

They were asking questions. Verse 30. They say, what miraculous sign will you do? Can you do that if you're dead? They were asking for bread.

Verse 34. They seem very up for everything Jesus is talking about. In verse 34, they say, sir, from now on, give us this bread. So they seem to be up for it.

However, when we get to verse 41, they're grumbling. At this, the Jews began to grumble about him. They've gone from being enthusiastic to being grumbling.

And in verse 52, they dispute or argue sharply. The Jews began to argue sharply among themselves. What is he talking about? And the one thing, of course, they weren't doing was believing.

[6 : 38] But we've got a conundrum here, haven't we? Jesus saying, you have no life in you. But they seem to be walking around and talking and doing all sorts of stuff.

So we learn from this that as far as Jesus is concerned, you can walk and talk and argue and debate. And be dead.

Jesus says, I can see you walking around doing all that stuff. Let me just tell you something. You are dead. So let's just think about this. Biological life is apparently not the same as life.

Life. A bit strange, isn't it? Let's go back to Genesis. I've got the quote up there on the screen. With our first parents.

Jesus. God said, You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. For in the day you eat of it, you will die.

[7 : 51] Hands up those who know whether Adam and Eve did eat from the tree. Yeah, they did, didn't they? And Adam and Eve continued walking and talking, but God says, The moment you decide and act to break the relationship of trust and obedience to me, you're dead.

You would expect, as soon as they go, on whatever fruit it was, two corpses. It isn't quite like that, is it? They're corpses walking around.

But what they are, they're excluded from the garden. And they become mortal in the sense that it says, From dust you are made, and to dust you will return.

God says, You're dead. And that's the world we're in now, of people who walk and talk, and as far as we can say, yeah, medically, biologically, they're alive, but God says, You're dead.

We're thinking about that. Let's explore this a little bit further. If we think of what the Apostle Paul taught, and he said, The wages of sin is death.

[9 : 32] That creatures who don't trust God, and don't obey God, earn something. And what they earn is a coffin.

The wages of sin is death. Human death is a direct consequence of human sin. That's affected the whole world, and what Christians call the fall, or English-speaking Christians call the fall, French-speaking Christians call the split, le rapture.

Let's think of what Jesus said, in a passage that we looked at earlier. An hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.

And Jesus is sort of imagining, a little bit like that scene, in the Valley of Dry Bones, in Ezekiel, that there's dead people, and they hear the voice of the Son of God, and they begin to live.

That's what he's thinking about, but they're dead to begin with. When we're going back to the Apostle Paul, he says, You Christians, just remember this, once you were dead, in your trespasses and sins, but the Lord made you alive.

[10 : 55] If you're a Christian this morning, it's worth remembering, isn't it? Where were you? You were dead. What happened to you? The Lord made you alive. It's coming back to this, the negative, unless something, something, something, you have no life, you are dead.

And I think this is one of the hard saying bits, isn't it? People won't accept this. If you go around the streets, and say, Good morning, neighbor at number 82, oh, by the way, you're dead.

Do you realize that? You might be saying, Christianity surely doesn't say this. I'm a decent person. I'm a healthy person. I'm an independent person. I know I'm not perfect. But I'm not dead. And God says, Yes, you are.

You say, Well, come on. Other people might say, I go to church. I was baptized as a baby. I do all sorts of good things. And God says, Yeah, you can do all that and still be dead.

[12 : 06] And you can say, Oh, come on. I do all the things that are virtuous in our society. I recycle everything that can be recycled. It says, Be kind, and I'm kind to people.

I support equalities and diversity and every ism you could think of. I care for the planet. I do all those things. And God says, Yeah, you do. But you're dead. Unless you, what it says, you are dead. And I wonder whether you agree with Jesus in this. Whether it comes as a shock or an affront or something you say, actually, he's absolutely right. But he definitely says it. That's the first thing. If you have no life in you, you are dead. Let's think a little bit further on this.

[13:05] When Jesus says life, what is he talking about? He's talking about not just the sort of fragile biological life that we have.

You know, we have strange sort of pinky, different colored people. And if you put us under a steamroller, we get squashed and we don't live any longer.

I mean, we're very fragile creatures. Don't try that experiment at home. But Jesus is saying there is a quality of life that lasts forever that is not just squashed out by some sort of physical accident. He talks about eternal life. He's talked about this a lot. But it's there in verse 47. I tell you the truth. He who believes has everlasting life.

And it's put in verse 47. I've got the wrong verse, have I? I will raise him up at the last day. Which verse is that?

[14:10] It is, perhaps it's 37, is it? Which one? 44. 44. 44. Oh, thank you very much. I will raise him up at the last day.

This is what technically you'd call eschatological life. Eschaton means last. The last day. It goes to the last day and comes into its own at the last day.

I will raise him up at the last day. That's something to look forward to. Isn't it? To be raised on the last day. There's somebody being raised.

Verse 58. He will live. Oh, have I got the right verse? The one who feeds on me will. No. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died.

But he who feeds on this bread will live forever. Folks, we're not in a crematorium now, are we? We're not at the graveside. But one day we will be.

[15:10] And at the crematorium, at the graveside or at the cemetery, here are the words of Jesus. That's not the end. It doesn't have to be the end.

He who believes on me, I will raise them on the last day. Eternal life is life that outlasts this world and belongs to the world of heaven and eternity.

And Jesus says, that's life. And actually, you can start that life now. And if you're a Christian, that's what you have done.

You have started the life of heaven, of eternity, of glory, now. Might not seem like it, but that is the truth of it.

in Colossians, and if you've been joining the studies in Colossians, I think we're going to come to this next week, aren't we? Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

[16:11] When Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory. And he says, set your minds on that.

Set your minds on Christ. Set your minds above where Christ is. realize this is the life you've already started, this eternal heavenly life.

What a privilege to have that. We so often forget it, don't we? Because we're praying for one another's bad backs and operations and so on. We're very thinking about those things, which is a right thing to do.

But let's not exclude the fact that if you're a Christian, you're already into eternity, everlasting life, resurrection.

And how that ought to change our perspective on everything, just say that as a reminder to us. Let's say another thing about this matter of life. The nature of life cannot be separated from the creator God.

[17:19] I deliberately started with us thinking about God as creator. The one who has made the heavens and the earth, the seas, the stars, the winds, the waves and everything.

He's the creator. And the nature of life is to be in relation to our maker. And Jesus says this in John 17:3, this is eternal life that they may know you, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

life. It's not the only thing you can say about eternal life, but it's at least this. It is knowing God. You can't measure that with a thermometer or a stethoscope.

It's knowing God. This is eternal life. To know God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Life comes as we know God.

knowing means not just to memorize certain phrases or formulas about God, but to be in a person-to-person relationship.

[18 : 31] And a relationship not of conflict, but a reconciled relationship. You know the difference between a relationship of conflict and a happy relationship. To be in a reconciled relationship with God and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ.

And if you want to spell it out, it will be a relationship of reverence, of honor and worship, a relationship of dependence, a relationship of obedience, a relationship of love.

To be in this relationship is to be in eternal life. This is eternal life that they know the only God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

And I can ask this question, do you know God? Is that what your life is built on? That sinner though I am, failure though I often am, God knows me and by his grace I know him.

And I can pray, our father in heaven and know that that's my father. This is eternal life to know God and if you don't know God you don't have life.

[19 : 55] I just throw in this text because it's one of my favourites from Jeremiah. let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who does steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord.

that was the first bit about life, what it is if you don't have life.

Let's think now about getting life. The purpose of this text is about getting life. If I am dead, how do I get life?

And I want to look into this text quite carefully and say first of all there is a deep mystery here. How does Jesus get life?

Look at verse 57. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, etc.

[21 : 21] It talks about people, people. but the first thing he says is how does Jesus live? I live because of the Father. And who is the Father?

He is the living Father. How does Jesus get life? He gets life like this, the living Father, who is the fountain of life, who is alive with life, who abounds in life, who is alive, the living Father, and his life flows over willingly, eternally, gloriously into the Son.

I live because of the Father. The living Father is the fountain of life, is bursting with life, and this life flows over into the Son fully, willingly, eternally, gloriously.

It's a little phrase, but it says a lot, doesn't it? The living Father, I live because of him. That's how Jesus has life. He's the sent one. And I think, doesn't this elevate our thoughts of God?

We're sort of having a little glimpse into the eternal reality of who God is and how the Trinity is the Father and the Son. And that life flows on.

[22 : 58] Let's go, how does Jesus give life? And let's look carefully at this text, verse 55, which says, have I got the right text?

I don't think I have. I think 56. something, something, something, something remains in me and I in him.

This is how life comes into a believer. Something, something, something, something, this person abides in me and I in him, meaning him or her.

We have the Father and the Son and we have people drawn into such a relationship, such a relationship of closeness, that Jesus can say, this person abides in me and Jesus can say, I abide in this person.

It's fairly mind-blowing, isn't it? To think that we might abide in the eternal Son and the eternal Son might live in us.

[24 : 26] But that's what it says. There's this close union between Christ and his people. people. I'm not going to try and say I understand this or can explain it.

I don't think it's meant to be understood and explained. I think it's just to be received by faith and wondered at. That is our identity as Christians. The Son is in the Father, the Father is in the Son. It says that in John 17 21. And in a similar way, but not exactly the same way, the believer is in the Son and the Son is in the believer. And this is the nature of what it is to be a Christian, to be caught up into, I'll try and use my words cautiously and I hope you let me do that and just get the idea.

A Christian is caught up into the being of God, we in him and he in us. I think if we could grasp that we would say that was amazing.

But that's what being a Christian is. It's much bigger than we think. Isn't it? I mean, God have mercy on us. Sometimes our idea of being a Christian reduces to is it me on the rotor?

[25 : 40] Can I catch the bus in time to get to church? And that's sort of the main thing. And so and so has got a poorly leg or something like that. And that's being a Christian. What a small version that is of what the real thing is.

Abiding in God and the Lord living in us. The almighty God. God. But I missed a bit out, didn't I? I missed the something, something, something.

And that's what we need to get to. How does Jesus give life? It isn't just a sort of mystical closeness thing. There is a specific to this.

And he specifies it by saying offering his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. this is something.

So let's just see what he says. We've moved, as it were, this is my illustration of it, from the baker's shop to the butcher's shop. So down London Road we have patisseries and bread shops and then we've got butcher's shops.

[26 : 43] And he's moved from the baker's shop from four-fars to whatever the name of the butcher's is, which I don't know. Like that. Why?

Let's just check that what I'm saying is correct. Verse 51, I am the living bread that came down from heaven. End of the verse, this bread is my flesh.

If you're German-speaking that would be the German word for meat, I think. This bread is my flesh.

Verse 52, they say, how can this man give us his flesh?

To eat. You know, flesh, this stuff. Verse 53, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

That was the unless. Unless you eat his flesh and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Verse 54, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

[27 : 54] Verse 55, my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. That's the real stuff.

You know, the bread that you eat, even if you get it organically made from individually labelled oats or grains or something, that's not bread.

bread. That's something approximating to bread. The real bread is Jesus. Verse 56, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me.

Do you see something's being emphasised here? Verse 57, just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me, munches on me, will live because of me.

So he's moved to this idea of flesh. And why has he done this? Why is it so important? And this is where I think the Jews would have strongly objected.

[28 : 57] Not only is it just distasteful, but it's specifically distasteful to a Jewish audience. And we can say, you know, I came along to church this morning, I thought I'd get something nice, and instead I've got gallons of blood.

It's like being in a, what's the word for the place where they slice up cows? Abattoir. It's like being in an abattoir this morning. Blood all over the place.

It's violent, it's unnatural, it's bloody, it's gory, it's off-putting, it's completely unacceptable. You know, I'm a vegetarian and I've come along here this morning and I'm getting all this blood stuffed down my throat.

it would be completely unacceptable to a Jewish audience because they would say, you know, we've been taught by Moses that blood is a very special thing.

Can I just be turned down a tiny little bit because I'm just a little bit there. Thank you. They'd say, we've been taught by Moses that blood is a very special thing.

[30 : 04] Blood is what you use to make sacrifices with. Blood is to do with animal sacrifices. The blood is such an important part, a key part of many, not all, but many of the animal sacrifices.

The life of the sacrifice is in its blood. If you take away the blood, you take away the life. And we don't eat blood, we don't drink blood, we wouldn't dare do that.

If we get touched by blood, we're contaminated and strangely the only thing that can cleanse us is blood. You know, blood, we're not going with that. That's to do with sacrifices. That's to do with when an animal is put in the place of the sinner and the wrath of God, as it seems, this is what seems to be happening, descends upon that animal.

I, the sinner, put my hands on that animal. I, as it were, contaminate the animal with my sin. And what happens to the animal? It's killed. And its blood is shed.

And the evidence of that is the blood and that's put on the altar and all sorts of things. That's what blood is about. Don't tell me about drinking blood. what's to do with sacrifices.

[31 : 21] Why does Jesus go out of his way to be so unacceptable in what he says? And the answer is exactly for this reason.

Because when he dies and shed his blood, it will be a sacrifice. And he will substitute for the sinner like an animal, except he's a proper substitute because he's a man.

And when all my sin on him is laid, he will get the results of my sin and he will die under the wrath of God. And his blood will be the evidence of that.

And his blood will be the atoning, as it were, the token, the coinage by which God forgives sin.

That's why he uses it, because he will be a blood sacrifice. He will be a blood sacrifice. The animal substituted, but on the cross, the place of violent, unnatural, hideous, awful death, Jesus substitutes with a sinner.

[32 : 34] And he went there for you and me, didn't he? That's what it took to save you and me. If he hadn't gone to the cross, we would still be in our sins, wouldn't we?

Nothing less than the blood of Jesus will do to save me. That is what is needed to solve the problem of eating the forbidden fruit, as it were, to solve the problem of sin, to solve the problem of death, going from dust to dust.

That is what is needed to give the answer at the cemetery, at the graveside, at the crematorium.

Jesus' blood. That is the thing that solves the relationship problem between me and God and brings me close, because he died and shed his blood.

blood. And unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

There is no other way to be saved, there is no other way to be alive, there is no other way to face death than his blood.

Nothing else will do. we have to eat and drink this. Let's come to this eating and drinking. He says, unless you munch my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

[34 : 14] Let's talk about munching as sort of an active partaking, isn't it? It's saying, yes, I want this, you know, munching on a carrot, munching on whatever your favourite food is.

You know, I want to get this inside me, excuse me, probably as rapidly as possible, and I don't care whether it makes a noise, I'm just going to munch on this.

And Jesus is saying, I offer myself to you and invite you to eat your fill of the benefits of my cross, to take into yourself the amazing grace that the promises of Christ bring.

Now, you might be thinking, well, hold on a minute, isn't this, isn't he actually talking about the mass? You know, isn't that what they do? Isn't that what Catholics do? Eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus? Maybe that's what he's talking about.

And I would say, no, he's not. For one thing, the mass didn't exist then. Jesus hasn't yet talked about the last supper, so it wouldn't have made any sense.

[35 : 19] And clearly he's not talking about literal things, he's talking metaphorically about faith. He who comes to me, he says, eats, shall not hunger, that's in verse 35.

He who believes in me shall never thirst. He's talking metaphorically about this faith appropriation relationship. and I ask, is that for you?

Do you so see your need that you say, I need him? And do you so see his suitability as a savior?

And do you so convinced by what happened on the cross you say, if he says that does the trick, I am absolutely up for that.

It absolutely fits my need and I'm going to say yes, yes, yes to the Lord Jesus. That's absolutely what I want. Will you eat his flesh and drink his blood in that sense?

A little bit like David, that's why I took some time to do that this morning. David didn't drink the blood of his men because to do so would say I agree with it and I am happy to partake of the benefits of it.

[36 : 35] And if we drink the blood of Jesus we say I agree. It's a humiliating thing to say, isn't it? Because by nature we would say I don't need help with my life.

I'm okay. I don't need anybody to die for me. That's what human pride says. And Christ brings us to the point of saying actually I'm such a scumbag.

My sin is so awful and abominable. I do need that. I need it. I accept it.

I embrace it. Of course there is an implication for communion because we're saying exactly the same thing when we come to the communion table.

So it's not completely divorced from the communion table. But when we come to the communion table we eat and drink and we say I willingly accept what Christ did for me.

[37 : 36] And I take it in. And it's an invitation. The reason this passage is here is to say please do. It's on offer. Jesus is offering himself.

Why not eat and drink of this amazing food that is provided. So to summarize what we've been thinking about this morning we started off on the negative and said having no life.

And Jesus putting it to us we need to accept this. By nature we do not have the eternal life that we need. The eternal life is knowing God.

That's eternal life. That's something that Adam lost by his sin when he fractured that relationship with God. And even as we walk around by nature we are dead.

cut off from the true source of life. If you like life has become two-dimensional and monochrome when real life is three-dimensional and in full color.

[38 : 42] And I ask first do you agree with this hard saying? Do you agree with this hard saying? life is true. And then we talked about getting life and we said the Father is the fountain of life.

The Son has life from the Father and he imparts it to us in this closest possible way. But very specifically this only comes through the blood sacrifice of Jesus.

there is no other way than his cross. And he offers himself to munch on that.

And I invite you I ask you let's do that. Let's be people who feed on the living bread. Let's be people who take those promises and say yes amen.

Whoever munches on me says Jesus will live forever. let's take that perspective into the future. You know the best is yet to come. The best is yet to come.

[39 : 50] He came not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. Amen.