

Life in Christ

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Date: 28 January 2018

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[0 : 00] Prepare us for that through the word that we have here. And again, I'll read verses 53 to 55. 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.

You know, there are times and sometimes many times when we're certainly tempted to steer away from what might appear to be difficult parts of Scripture.

You know, the hard sayings of the Bible, as some things we might put it. And particularly when we read these words of Jesus, that Jesus spoke in that synagogue there in Capernaum.

Because I'm sure at first reading, or maybe more than first reading, these words sound difficult to grasp. And maybe might even sound offensive.

[1 : 04] And you might be tempted just to want to push them to one side and take what we might perceive to be the more palatable parts of Scripture. Because here in John 6, I think we find this scenario.

You know, words that Jesus is uttering about himself, and then in turn words that Jesus is giving to tell us what man's response should be to Jesus. And particularly that latter part, our response to Jesus, what our response should be.

And certainly words that should cause us to sit up and listen to what Jesus is actually saying. The words that I read there again from verse 53 to 55, and then into 56, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

I mean, when Jesus spoke these words, or even before he actually mentioned these specific words, Jesus' opponents had already been offended at him. Offended at what he'd said about himself as the bread of life.

You go back to verse 50, and you see what Jesus is saying of himself as the bread from heaven, bread coming down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

[2 : 20] And Jesus saying, I'm the living bread, come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he'll live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. And we're told that there's a negative response to Jesus because of what he said of himself as that bread from heaven.

So you've got one section of the crowd who are already offended at Jesus. And then you see a further negative reaction. You see those who are called disciples.

In fact, you read there from verse 60, we were to read on in that section. You read that those who are called here disciples, they turn away from Jesus because of what Jesus has said of himself.

Because of what Jesus has said of himself and the response that he asks, that he gives, of our eating and drinking, even these very words, eating his flesh, drinking his blood.

And of course, the face value of these words was just too much for many. So much so that, as I say, if we read on in the passage, we read that only 12 remained with Jesus.

[3 : 31] And of course, one of those 12 would later betray Jesus. So in other words, Jesus' words divide. We're going to see a division later this evening, just in, I don't know, half an hour's time or so.

We're going to see a division. We're going to see a division between those who will be at this area set aside for the Lord's people to remember the Lord's death till he comes. And we'll see there is a division because we will see there are others who will not be at the table, who will not be remembering, through the supper, remembering the Lord's death till he comes.

There will be that division that Jesus' words and Jesus' death brings about because the actions of Jesus, the words of Jesus, as they divided then, divide now.

And we'll divide until Jesus returns. But of course, we really need to know what is Jesus saying here? I mean, we are in the, this evening's service is a service in which we remember the Lord's death till he comes.

We're in the context of another Lord's Supper. So, what are we going to make of these words? Are we going to go along with those who take these words literally and say, well, there's a physical presence of the Lord Jesus and the bread and the wine.

[5 : 01] You know, that the bread and the wine are somehow transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. Surely not. What are we going to take from these words?

Jesus pointing, you and me, pointing us to the cross of Calvary. Surely we're going to see in these words what Jesus is saying about himself.

Pointing, pointing us to the cross. Because he's making references, of course, here to his flesh and his blood. And of course, we realize it was at Calvary. We know it was at Calvary where Jesus gave his body for us.

Where Jesus shed his blood for sinners such as ourselves. And surely then, when he's talking about this feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood, he's pointing, pointing us to faith.

To faith in him. To our believing in him. To believing in him as our Savior. To our being nourished spiritually in the Lord Jesus. So that you and I are fully satisfied in him.

[6 : 10] Because what Jesus did on the cross for us. Because he gave his body for us on the cross. Because he shed his blood. Because that shedding of blood pointing to the life that Jesus gave for sinners.

So surely then, even right at the outset, we've got to say that what Jesus is saying there in what might appear to be a very difficult world. He's telling us, you know, these are words to help us. To help us remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross. To help. To help you and me remember. And to prepare to remember his death till he comes.

Because, you know, we're called to remember. The command, remember the Lord's death. As I mentioned just a moment ago, we do it by word. God's word. And we do it by sacrament.

The signs. The sacrament. Because, of course, it's the word of God. God's word. That tells us what Jesus has done for us. What Jesus has done for us in his perfect obedience even in today.

[7 : 15] So that God's word enables us to focus on the knowledge of his death. And these visible signs, the bread and the wine, these signs teach us.

They're there visually to teach us about what Jesus did for us in his giving of himself on the cross. Pointing us to that once for all sacrifice for sin.

And he's offering up his body for us. So by word and by sacrament, I pray that, you know, we all will grow in our love for the Savior.

That we'll grow the more in appreciation of who Jesus is. and what your response, what my response must be to who Jesus is, to his identity. And surely the response that we're to give to him to help us to be his disciples, to be his followers, to have that true and constant fellowship with our Savior and to be fully satisfied in him, to know that our true satisfaction is found in none else other than the Lord Jesus.

So, we're going to reflect on these verses, these words, to help us in our preparation, in our remembering the Lord's death till we come.

[8 : 37] So, from this passage, three things then. Firstly, I think we've echoed this already, who does Jesus say he is? And then secondly, what must we do in response to his identity, to self-revelation of himself?

And then thirdly, again, we mentioned a wee moment ago, the division that Jesus' identity brings. So, who does Jesus say he is?

What's Jesus saying here in this wider passage? Well, remember where he is. Jesus is in that place, that area where he's been performing many miracles.

He's performing these miracles as signs, signs pointing from the sign to himself. these signs telling what Jesus has come to do to win salvation for his people.

So, he's been in that Galilee region. He's been preaching the good news. He's been healing the sick. He's gathered a large crowd of thousands around him. and then, if we were to have read the whole of that chapter, we realise it's getting late.

[9 : 44] It's a bit late. There aren't the facilities near at hand to feed that vast number of people. So, Jesus feeds them miraculously. But, more.

He's going to use that opportunity in the feeding of the bread, the fish. He's going to use that opportunity to point the people to himself, to what Jesus has come to do, to fully satisfy the spiritually hungry.

So, he performs that miracle of the feeding, feeding of the 5,000, 5,000 men plus women plus children. Now, what's happened? They've been temporarily satisfied.

Their physical hunger has been temporarily appeased, temporarily satisfied. But, they're going to get hungry again. But, this is the point, surely.

Jesus has come, not to bring a temporary satisfaction of physical need. He's come to bring an eternal satisfaction.

[10 : 47] He's come to meet fully, fully and completely the spiritual hunger of those for whom he's come to save. He's come as the bread, the true bread of life, the bread that truly satisfies and fully satisfies.

that truth becomes apparent as Jesus crosses the other side of the lake. As we saw there from verse 16 onwards, the crowd get wind of what's happened.

Jesus has obviously gone by himself across the other side. They follow him. And, of course, Jesus perceives that these people have followed him because he was able to satisfy their physical hunger.

hunger. But, Jesus tells them that the miracle of that multiplying of the loaves and the fish wasn't first and foremost to alleviate their physical hunger.

But, that miracle was done to point the people to Jesus, to the one who offers and provides that full satisfaction for their true hunger, their spiritual hunger.

[11 : 53] As we read, Jesus calls the crowd not to work for that which is temporary. That which is fleeting, passing, that gives no eternal value.

No. But, Jesus is directing their hearts beyond the immediate to the eternal. So, we read in verse 27, do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man, Jesus, will give.

So, Jesus is continuing, he's addressed to the crowds, he's telling them of the necessity, the absolute necessity to believe in him. Because he is the one, the only one, who can truly and fully meet their deepest needs.

Jesus is the one who's been sent from heaven to earth to do what no other can do. He's the one who calls on others, who calls on you, to believe in him.

He's the one who alone can give, truly satisfies. And as then, so for now, it's for those, you who hear his voice, it's for you to believe.

[13 : 03] It's for you to respond to what Jesus is offering you. He's offering salvation. He's offering eternal life through faith in him. And that's the food that endures.

That's for those who were hearing him at the time, those who hear him now. that's what you and I, what we must work for, what we must seek after, what our heart's priority has to be.

It's not to go after those things which satisfy temporarily, but to look for and to know and to have the bread of life, the Lord Jesus, Jesus who offers himself to you.

And so there's Jesus, he's telling the crowd that there's food that endures to eternal life, that there's nourishment, that true nourishment that gives life, that gives life in all its fullness.

Jesus is telling that crowd there that he's that food, that he's the bread of life. He's the one, as we said, who's come from heaven, he's been sent by the Father, he's come to give that food that lasts and lasts eternally.

[14 : 17] And as the crowd are hearing Jesus tell of food sent from heaven, what are they thinking? They're thinking immediately of the manna.

Remember that food that came from heaven during the time of the Exodus, during the time that Jim was speaking of in the morning, many, many centuries before in the time of Moses.

And if that miraculous provision of daily food was sent from heaven, then the people are thinking, well, if this Jesus is a prophet, surely he's got to do some similar sign to prove who he is.

In verse 30, what signs you do that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? And then Jesus, Jesus in his grace, he's using these comments, these comments about manna, to tell of his being, the eternal manna, the eternal bread from heaven, heaven, that bread that doesn't perish, the manna in the desert, of course, that perished, that Jesus is the true bread from heaven that never perishes.

And the people of Jesus are saying, people, you must take by faith and believe, believe that the bread of heaven, that that bread is Jesus, taken by faith, for the salvation of your souls.

[15 : 36] So here's Jesus telling the crowd who he is, he's the one sent from God, sent from the Father, he's the Messiah, he's the Christ, he's the fulfillment of promise, he's the one who alone can give what no other can give, he's the one alone who never perishes, he's the bread of life.

You know, when we think of that great statement that Jesus makes of himself, who he is, the bread of life, he's telling us of his identity, and surely our response in that self-revelation of Jesus, surely our response must be to bow in his presence, to worship him for who he is.

He is that bread from heaven, he's the sustainer of life, we think of bread, you know, bread in a physical sense, in the sustenance of life, the staff of life. You know, if in the physical aspect of bread, you know, we can take to mean that, that staple of life, sustainer, as we said, the staff of life, then think of what Jesus is saying about himself in the spiritual realm.

He provides that which is infinitely greater than what's physical, because he sustains his people eternally.

He's the spiritual food that gives eternal life. He's the one who gives life in all its fullness, so that we never perish, that we'll have that eternal life, so that we need to go to no other, no other person, no other thing, no other idea, no other prophet, no other so-called saviour.

[17 : 22] He and he alone gives that true satisfaction. And so, when we think of Jesus as the bread of life, then we've got to focus on what's ours by faith, by faith in him.

What is, what is ours, what is yours, you who know him, a saviour, you have life. I mean, because of the death of Jesus, you have life.

His death has brought you life. That life, that eternal life that you enjoy now, and that eternal life to be enjoyed in all its fullness when we pass from this physical life, this side of eternity, we pass into the eternal presence of God.

You, you who know Jesus as that bread of life, you who in a short time will be at the Lord's table, well, just dwell on that truth, the truth that Jesus has come as the bread of life to give you life, to give you life in all its fullness.

That bread of life, he's come to sustain you eternally, he's come to satisfy you fully, completely, wholly, eternally. He's come to give you that food that endures eternally, food that doesn't disappoint, it's food that never grows stale, it's food that never becomes inedible.

[18 : 53] Jesus is that food that he offers to you, that endures eternally, because he is, the bread he is, the eternal son of God. But, if that reference to Jesus, Jesus telling himself as the bread of life, we might say, well, okay, that's clear, that's understandable, what about what he says next?

When he goes on to speak of the bread that I'll give for the life of the world, and says, verse 51, that bread is my flesh. And then we might say that dramatic logic, the logic of the statement, 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. And we read on in verse 54, whoever feeds in my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. What are we to make of these statements, particularly in the context of the communion meal that we're shortly going to be involved in?

I'm just going to skip these words, just quickly go past them and say, oh well, they're too difficult to fathom. Or are we actually going to rejoice in what Jesus is saying of himself in these words and so that we go to the table and go to the table the more aware of what Jesus has done for us and how we must respond to what Jesus is saying of himself.

well, I think, you know, if we've been following the passage so far, we've already alluded to the meaning of what Jesus is saying here because Jesus isn't saying what literally, he's not speaking of a physical eating of his flesh and a physical, a literal drinking of his blood.

[20 : 42] No, because if he's already spoken metaphorically about his being the bread of life, then surely he's saying, well, you know, he's telling us all we need to feed in that bread.

We need to be nourished by that bread. So Jesus is telling us, he's telling us of our need to feed on him, to feed on that bread, to be nourished by him.

If you go back to verse 35, Jesus has already spoken in that kind of language about feeding and drinking. He's already spoken about himself in that context. I'm the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. So what's that coming to Jesus? It's believing in him. It's faith. And Jesus repeats, you see, from verse 35, move on to the latter verses.

Jesus repeats that demand of faith. You go to verse 40, this is the will of my Father that everyone who looks in the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. Verse 47, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

[21 : 51] Faith in Jesus isn't blind faith. It's a faith that's exercised in Jesus because of what Jesus has done in his flesh and in his blood.

It's faith, faith in the Saviour, the Saviour of the world who came from heaven to earth to offer himself as that once for all sacrifice for sins. As we certainly were learning this morning, he's telling of that faith, you, that I must exercise in relation to Jesus.

In Jesus, the once for all sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice that was offered to satisfy God's justice. That sacrifice that paid the price for sin and paid it in full.

And only Jesus could pay in full that sacrifice, pay by his death. And he did it by his broken body, by his shed blood. So in the context of all that Jesus has been teaching about who he is, what he's speaking about, his giving of himself, giving of himself for our sins, and what, you know, a response must be to his death on the cross, you've got to have a response.

You must have a response to Jesus. There's no neutral ground in relation to Jesus. So, what must, what must we do in response to who Jesus is?

[23 : 20] Look at verse 53. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Let's just emphasize what we said right at the start.

Jesus is saying nothing of the sort about the bread and the wine at the table being transformed into his body and blood. That's a travesty of meaning. communion. Jesus died once for all.

He's not re-sacrificed every time that we take communion. But what surely Jesus is saying here, what he is saying here, is that you cannot come to God without first coming to Jesus.

You can't come to God without first coming to him and trusting in his finished work on the cross for your salvation. You cannot be found acceptable before God unless you come to God through Jesus and believe that what Jesus has done for you fully satisfies that justice.

What Jesus has done for you in his body giving, in his blood shed. Your salvation is found only in the Lord Jesus, only by faith in him and him alone.

[24 : 33] Look at that word at the start of verse 53 again, unless, unless you eat the flesh, the Son of Man drink his blood, unless you believe in the Lord Jesus, unless you trust in him alone for your salvation.

Jesus is telling us here, you have no life in you, you have no true eternal life. There's no other saviour who will do what Jesus has done for you through sacrifice on the cross.

There's no other way to the Father except through the Son. And you who will be coming to the front of this building, who will be affirming what the Lord Jesus has done for you, you'll do it by taking the bread and wine.

You'll be taking these symbols, these representations of the body and blood of Jesus and you'll take and take the bread by faith. Believe that what you're taking tells of that broken body, the broken body of the eternal Son of God.

And when you take that cup of wine, remember that cup, the wine speaks of the blood, the blood of the Son of God, that blood that was shed, shed on the cross to indicate that Jesus had given his life so that you might have life abundantly.

[25 : 57] But you have to feed in Christ. You have to have that intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. You have to have that communion with him by faith. There's no other way to life.

There's no other way to that life that Jesus promises to all who know him by faith. It's the life that the believer knows, the life that the believer has.

It's that abiding in the Lord Jesus. It's that intimate fellowship that only you who feed in the Lord Jesus can have and can know.

And I ask you this evening, are you feeding in the Lord Jesus? Do you believe on him? Do you believe in him? Do you know that blessed fellowship that you can have with the Son of God? Do you have that intimate communion with the Lord Jesus, the one who came from heaven to earth, the one who came to give his life for you? or about that command that Paul gives in 2nd Corinthians?

[27 : 04] Have you examined yourself? Have you examined yourself as to your faith, as to that saving faith? What did Paul say to the church in Corinth, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith?

Is it your heart's desire to know Jesus, to abide in him, to abide in him eternally? Do you know the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep?
Is it truly your desire to come to this part of the building to remember the Lord's death till he comes?
Is that your heart's desire to make your public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus?
Are you going to do it by even just taking the bread, taking the wine, and that profession given, saying yes, the Lord Jesus died for me on the cross?
that's your heart's desire to come to the table, to make that public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, and your place is at the table, and at the table in fellowship with one another, in fellowship of course, with the Lord Jesus, the bread of life.
[28 : 16] You'll be sharing in a meal, you'll be sharing in a meal that was instituted by the Lord himself. Remember when Jesus, that upper room, when he took the bread at that Passover meal, just a short, short time before his death?

Remember he took the bread and he took the cup? Remember what he said when he took the bread? What did he say? He said, this is my body, broken for you. Remember when he took the cup of wine?

What did he say? He said, drink of it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. So do you see that in your feeding on Christ by faith, that you're commanded to remember his death.

Take the elements that speak of the reason for your faith. But there's another response, isn't there, to Jesus' words? Because, go back to that word unless, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

There's a contrary response to the response of faith. There's the response of rejection. There's that response of refusing to feed on Christ, that refusal to believe in him.

[29 : 43] That's what we see here in the grumbling that we read of, certainly verse 41 and verse 52, the vision. Jesus spoke of himself as the true bread of heaven.

Grumbling. It was grumbling from Jesus' Jewish opponents. Those who couldn't accept that here's this man who they consider was no more than the carpenter's son from Nazareth.

And just as their ancestors, the Israelites, just as they grumbled against God in the desert when they refused to trust in God to meet all their needs. So here, many centuries later, the descendants, if you like, of these grumblers from the desert, these Jews in Jesus' day, they are grumbling against the Son of God.

They're refusing to believe in him. They're refusing to know him as the one who can supply all their needs, can supply their greatest need, salvation.

I mean, Jesus, verse 36, he's already told the crowd that they'd seen him and yet didn't believe in him. Now those who are hearing him are turning their backs on him because they will not believe.

[31 : 00] I pray there's no one here this evening who's turning his back or turning her back on Jesus because of Jesus' words. We're offended by the exclusive claims of Jesus.

We're offended even by the language that Jesus uses of the necessity to feed them by faith. Now if you're offended by Jesus' words, well just think in the consequences of your rejecting the word of Jesus.

Because Jesus said, listen again, he says, unless you feed me, unless you feed him, unless you recognize that his death is absolutely necessary to save sinners, unless you recognize Jesus as the once for all sacrifice for sin, then there's only for you that prospect of not eternal life, but eternal separation from God.

So look to Jesus. Look to the one who came from heaven to earth as the bread of life. you know, in human terms, physical terms, you don't want to go hungry, surely, that's not part of your makeup. You don't want to go hungry physically, so why remain hungry spiritually? Come to him, trust in him for your salvation, feed him by faith, taste, taste that bread, taste and see that God is good as we'll be singing in a psalm in a moment.

[32 : 34] When you taste and see that God is good, when you know the Lord Jesus as your saviour, you'll know that true satisfaction that can never, ever be taken from you.

Amen. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, we give you praise and thanks for your word. We give you thanks that you teach us through your word of the finished work of the Lord Jesus, he who died for sinners, he who died for us.

Lord, help us to see by faith the saviour of the world and help us by faith to feed in him, to be nourished of him, to know that true filling, that true satisfaction that is ours in him and in him alone. Forgive us, Lord, for our seeking satisfaction elsewhere. Forgive us, Lord, for the many times when we refuse to feed on the Lord Jesus. O Lord, help us, we pray, even in this time of communion, to so remember the Lord's death till he comes.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I mentioned Psalm 34. We're going to sing from Psalm 34.

[34 : 00] Sing Psalms on page 40. And we'll sing from the beginning down to verse 10. At all times I will bless the Lord.

I'll praise him with my voice, because I glory in the Lord. Let troubled souls rejoice. And then verse 8, come taste and see the Lord is good, who trusts in him, whose faith in him is blessed.

O fear the Lord, you saints, with need you will not be oppressed. Verse 1 to verse 10 Psalm 34 to God's praise. Thank you.