

Who Can Listen To It?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 August 2023

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

- [0 : 0 0] Please remain standing, if you would, as we read the Word of God, we'll stand in reverence. God, reveal your glory through the preaching of your Word. That's our prayer this morning.
- We're back in the Gospel of John, John chapter 6, this morning. We'll remain standing as I read from 51 through the end of the chapter this morning.
- Jesus says, 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.
- Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.
- [1 : 3 0] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. Jesus said these things in the synagogue as he taught at Capernaum.
- When many of his disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?
- Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
- But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. And he said, This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.
- After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?
- [2 : 4 0] You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus answered them, Did I not choose you, the twelve?
- And yet one of you is a devil. He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him. This is God's word.
- If you would, let's be seated and go to him once more in prayer. Father, it is your spirit that gives life. The flesh is no help at all.
- So we pray now that through the preaching of your word, that the spirit would give life this morning. That you would feed us spiritually as we open up your word and feast by faith on the Savior Jesus.
- We pray in Christ's name. Amen. What were you doing ten weeks ago? It's hard for us to remember what we were doing yesterday, much less ten weeks ago if you're like me.

[3 : 45] But that is what we're asking you to do this morning as we take a pause, take a break from the book of Psalms, get out of David's head and place ourselves back in the book of John, back in John's head this morning.

And I hope that we'll get ourselves caught up quickly this morning. You may remember John's gospel. It was written to answer one big question. Do you remember what it was? This is the biggest, most important question that anybody in the room could answer, anybody to settle in their minds.

John writes to answer the question, Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Not just who do we want him to be, who do we think that he is, who is he to me, but who is he actually, and how will we respond to who he is?

And so he tells us in chapter 20, verse 31, this is his thesis statement for the book of John. He says, I have written these things that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That's the point of the gospel of John. Life through faith in the Son of God, Jesus, Jesus, the Christ. And it's not only the point of the whole gospel of John, it's the point of our passage this morning.

[5 : 06] If I had to sum up our passage this morning in one sentence, I would do it like this. It said, Jesus has come to give life to all who believe. Jesus has come to give life to all who hear his words, and listen by faith and believe.

But as we see in our text this morning, not all listen to the words of Christ. Not all receive him for who he is. Not all believe what he says.

Ten weeks ago, we left Jesus in the middle of a conversation. And Jesus has been explaining how anybody might be saved. It's not by our doing. It's not by our natural birth.

It's not by our personal accomplishments. It's not by anything in us at all. We are saved simply by hearing and believing the words of Christ.

But some of the words of Christ are not easy to hear. For example, our passage this morning, look there to chapter 6, verse 51. Here's what he says.

[6 : 08] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Now when you say something like that, inevitably there are going to be questions. And so our passage this morning is structured around three questions. These are three questions that must be answered if we are to have spiritual life.

Three questions that must be answered if we are to have eternal life in Christ. The first question is asked by the Jews here in verse 52. How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

How can this man give us his flesh to eat? You know, sometimes I think we forget that Jesus was a real person. I just want you to place yourself in this situation for a minute.

How would you respond if you heard somebody say these words? If I went and stood in Walmart and stood up and I said these words, these things that Jesus is saying here, if anyone eats this bread, he'll live forever.

[7 : 15] And the bread, by the way, is my flesh. How would you respond? You would ask some questions, I would hope. You would wonder, what in the world is this man talking about? If anybody eats this bread, he'll live forever.

The bread he's given is his flesh. How is he going to give us his flesh to eat? What does that mean? This is a rational, logical question to ask. How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

But Jesus doubles down here in verse 53, doesn't he? He says, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, unless you 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. Do we understand this? That a necessary condition of our salvation, a necessary condition of our future hope and our resurrection to come, is that we would feed and drink and consume the body and blood of Christ.

You all wonder why sometimes people think Christians are strange. We believe some weird stuff, don't we? The Bible talks about some very strange stuff.

[8 : 29] I mean, just imagine if you had no knowledge of the Bible whatsoever. If you're here visiting with us for the first or second time, just imagine if this is your first sermon that you're sitting through, and you're like, y'all eat Jesus.

What does he mean by this? Is he advocating for some sort of religious cannibalism? What is this? How do we eat his flesh? How can he say this?

Well, to set the record straight, I hope that it's clear, I think it's meant to be clear, Jesus is not speaking in physical terms here. Nobody in the history of mankind has ever physically, actually eaten the body and blood of Jesus.

He's speaking literally. He means what he's saying. If you don't eat and if you don't drink, you have no life in you. But he's not speaking physically. And this was the Jews hang up here, isn't it?

They're seeing and they're hearing, they're listening to Jesus's words through a purely physical filter. And they cannot get past that physical lens to get to the spiritual point that Jesus is trying to make.

[9 : 38] But as he often does, this is exactly what Jesus is doing. He's taking a physical object, a physical lesson, a physical experience that each of us experience day in and day out.

And he's drawing from it a spiritual point. What's the point? Verse 55 tells us. He says, My flesh is true food.

My blood is true drink. It's a comparison. Comparison. Think about this with me. Just as physical food, it gives us physical energy.

So feasting on Christ gives us spiritual energy. Just as food gives us physical nourishment, feasting on Christ gives us spiritual nourishment. Just as food and drink is necessary for physical life, so this true food is necessary for spiritual life.

If we go physically famished for long enough, we will die. If we are spiritually famished, we will truly die. Just as food and drink, it satisfies desire. It meets a need.

[10 : 43] It satisfies a craving. So feasting on Christ satisfies true desire, ultimate desire, ultimate need, in a way that nothing else ever can. I wonder if you caught the lesson from your breakfast this morning.

You know, the way that our bodies crave and desire and need physical sustenance, it's meant to teach us of our true need, not for food, not for food, but for true food, for Christ himself.

Here's one more. Just as what you eat, in a sense, becomes one with you, you ever heard, you are what you eat? It abides in you.

So, verse 57, he says, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.

Do we realize what a glorious invitation that is? if we can, if we can grasp the depth of what Jesus is extending to us here, we are, we are invited not just to benefit from Christ, but to share in the very life of Christ.

[12 : 02] We're invited not just to receive something from him, but to be united with him. He in us and us in him. This is, this is right at the heart of the gospel.

Track with me here. Because too often we treat our relationship with God as if we simply receive something from him. We come to God to get forgiveness. We come to God to get peace.

We come to God to escape from the wrath of God. We come to God to escape from hell. We come to God to get heaven. These are glorious gifts, but they are byproducts of the central gift of the gospel.

You know what it is? God himself. That we are united with Christ. It's union with Christ himself.

This is the only way anyone is saved. Christ comes down from heaven, is born in the likeness of man, lives perfectly where I have failed, where you have failed.

[13 : 01] He dies in our place. He rises from the grave and says, if you come to me, I will take what you have earned. You can have what I have earned. Not just have it, but become it.

2 Corinthians 5, 21. He made him who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that in him, in him, we might receive the righteousness of God.

No. In him, we might become the righteousness of God. That's union with Christ.

And this is why Jesus says in verse 57, as the living Father sent me, and I live in my humanity, in the humanity of Christ, because of his obedience, I live because of the Father.

So whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, that manna from heaven and died.

[14 : 03] Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. The Christians are those who share in the life of Christ. Why? Because we are in Christ, and Christ is in us.

We are one with him. And so, because we are one with Christ, we have peace with God. God. Because we are one with Christ, we have joy that transcends all circumstances.

Because we are one with Christ, we have forgiveness that he has earned, not us. Because we are one with Christ, we are justified, declared righteous on his record, on his merit, not ours.

Because he is righteous, not because we are. Because we are one with Christ, we will be raised up on the last day because we share in his life, his death, and his resurrection.

Because we are one with Christ, we have every blessing of the gospel. Union with Christ is the fountain from which every other blessing, every other benefit of the gospel flows.

[15 : 07] So how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Well, he does so by dying on the cross. How can he give us his blood to drink?

He does so by pouring it out on behalf of sinners. By dying, not for his own sin, but for the sin of all who will come to him in faith.

How do we receive his sacrifice? How do we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man? And we do so by faith. By feasting on him.

By faith. John Calvin. He says, Faith is the mouth and the stomach of the soul. If you want to consume, if you want to receive what Christ has done, we do so by coming to him daily by faith.

Church, is your soul satisfied in Christ? Do you seek to satisfy the hunger and longing of your soul with a life-giving satisfaction of Christ or with earthly bread?

[16 : 11] Do you listen and receive his words? Do you consume them as life to your soul? Do you constantly fill yourself with the body and blood of Christ broken and poured out for you?

If you don't, ask God right now to do a work in you. To cause you to hunger and thirst for that life-giving sacrifice.

And if you do, then praise God. Because that did not come from you. We see that in our second point this morning. The second question.

Question number two. Who can listen to this? Who can listen to it? We see this in verses 60 through 65. His disciples now have a turn to ask a question.

The Pharisees responded. The Jews responded. His disciples were listening to his message. And verse 60 says, When many of his disciples heard it, they said, Jesus, this is a hard saying.

[17 : 10] Who can listen to it? That's a good question, isn't it? Because this message, this gospel message, is not naturally comprehended.

The message of the gospel is beautiful, and it is good, and it is simple, and it is true, and it is offensive to sinful flesh.

Sinful flesh hates what Christ is presenting here. The very fact that we need salvation is offensive to a sinner, isn't it? Who, me?

I need salvation. You're telling me I need salvation? The Jews here, as they hear this, they think their standing with God is clean, is pure, is fine, based on their lineage.

They belong, they're children of Abraham. Who are you to tell us that we need to be saved from anything? How different is that from anything today? When we share the gospel with our friends, with our family, with our neighbors, I need to be saved?

[18 : 12] Who are you to tell me I need salvation? It's offensive to sinners like us that we are all spiritually dead apart from the grace of Christ.

Jesus says, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. And that's our condition, apart from Christ. We can't wrap our minds around this in our flesh.

How hard is it for somebody who is living, breathing, thinking, acting, doing, to tell them you're dead, spiritually dead, in the trespasses and sins in which you walk?

You have no life in you. Who can hear it? Not only this, but the method of receiving salvation is offensive to sinners like us, isn't it? We want to earn our salvation.

If salvation is possible, we want to play a part in making it happen for us. We are far too proud to receive something freely from God, so we want to work up our strength, be good enough, balance out the scales in the favor of us with our deeds, with our thoughts, with our actions.

[19 : 22] But look what Jesus says. He says, whoever believes has eternal life. Everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up.

The beginning and the end of our salvation is simply through faith in Christ. We cannot earn it. It's offensive to sinners like us.

Not only this, but the exclusivity of salvation is offensive to sinners like us, isn't it? Jesus says clearly and without apology, if you come to me, you have life.

If you don't come to me, you have no life. And there is no third option here. In North Myrtle Beach, I was invited, I was invited to speak one year at a Lenten service, a community Lenten service in preparation for Easter.

And the church had invited several pastors from the community to come speak. I knew a couple of the pastors. I knew them well. I knew that they preached the gospel. But I also knew some of the other pastors that were going to be there and some of the other churches that were going to be represented there, including the church that was hosting the event.

[20 : 38] And I knew that they were universalists. Do you know what that means? Meaning they believe everyone at the end of the day goes to heaven. Everybody, it doesn't matter what you believe, what you do, what you say, what you think, who you follow, what religion you claim to be a part of, who your savior is, universalists.

At the end of the day, everybody winds up in heaven. And so knowing this, I thought carefully about the text I would choose and I landed on Acts 4.12, which says this, there is salvation and no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. I preached on the exclusivity of salvation in Christ and Christ alone.

no other name. Salvation in no one else. Thankfully, no one revolted.

I made it safely to the end of the sermon, but I was not invited back. But I hope the message was clear. Our salvation is, as the famous Reformation doctrine summary goes, is by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone.

[22 : 04] And this is hard for modern ears to hear, isn't it? But modern ears need to know that we don't get to stand as judge over the words of Christ.

Do you hear that? We don't get to stand as judge over the words of Christ. Quite the opposite. Look there to verse 61. It says, Jesus, knowing this in himself, that his disciples were grumbling about this, said, Do you take offense at this?

Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? In other words, you are treating my words as if they were up for your examination.

You are treating my words as if they were on par with the words of any other man. You are sifting through them to see what is acceptable to you and what is not. What is up to your liking and what is not.

What is hard and what is easy. You are treating my words as if they were the words of any other teacher. If you only knew, if you could only see who I was, who it is that is speaking these words to you, you would know that my words are not subject to your evaluation.

[23 : 18] You don't rule over the words of Christ. Christ's words rule over you. How tempting is it when we share the gospel with our friends, with our family, to be worried, so worried about how it might be received to the point where maybe we just soften it up a little bit.

Maybe we just alter it just a bit. Maybe we keep all the good parts and leave out all the hard parts. We try to make it more palatable for them so that maybe they would just come to faith and get all the hard stuff later.

How tempting is it even as a pastor to stand week in and week out, open the word of God and attempt to appease a crowd rather than deliver words of life. Jesus says, that is not how anyone will hear my words.

It's not by our curating of the word of Christ. How then will we hear the words of God? Verse 63. He says, the spirit must give life.

The flesh is no help at all. If you would have spiritual life, it must come from the giver of spiritual life.

[24 : 36] Your flesh and all your goodness and all your efforts and all your accolades and all your accomplishments and all your works are worthless. And how does the spirit give this life-giving spiritual life is through the words of Christ.

Jesus says, the words that I've spoken to you are spirit and life. But, Jesus says, even still, there are some of you who do not believe. Have you ever wondered why, how it could be that two people can sit in the same room, listen to the same, text, hear the same sermon in the same place at the same time, and one person receives the word and the other person rejects the word.

What's the difference? What happened to you when you believed the word of Christ? What happened to you? What happened was the spirit gave you life.

The spirit, it says, no one can come to the father, no one can come to Christ unless it is granted to him by the father. And if it is granted by the father, then at the right time, at the exact moment, ordained and arranged by God before eternity began, the spirit will take the words of Christ, take them into your ears, take them into your brain, take them down into your heart where they will be for the first time believed and cherished as life for you.

Do you remember what that was like for you, believer, when that happened to you for the first time? I do. I remember reading the book of Romans and all of a sudden I'm seeing Christ like I've never seen him before.

[26 : 22] All of a sudden I'm seeing my sin like I've never seen it before. I remember studying the gospel of Mark with some men who disciplined me in college and all of a sudden I'm hearing things that I've heard my whole life.

I'm hearing stories of Christ that I've read as a child up until that point in my life but all of a sudden for some reason I am seeing the glory of Christ like I've never seen it before.

All of a sudden this everything to me, the spirit had taken the words of Christ and lit them on fire in my soul. Has he done that for you? That's what has happened if you are in Christ but not all belief.

Jesus wasn't guessing about the spiritual state of his followers. He knew that there were some there hearing his words who did not yet truly believe.

Verse 64 says he knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. Verse 70 says that he chose the twelve knowing full well that one of them Judas would betray him.

[27 : 30] this should sober us church that we can be so close to Christ we can be directly under his word we can hear it week in and week out claim to be near to him and yet not truly believe which leads to our third and final question this morning question number three this time it's Jesus' turn to ask a question do you want to go away as well?

Look there to verse 66 it says after this many of his disciples many not a few many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him so Jesus said to the twelve do you want to go away as well?

I don't know how many disciples left Jesus that day it seems like his message was too much for them to bear you know it's interesting to me as I read this that if Jesus preached this sermon at a Sunday service in a lot of churches in America today he wouldn't have a job on Monday Jesus by modern church standards church planting standards he would be a terrible church planter he just drove the crowds away didn't he I think it's clear Jesus wasn't interested in simply drawing a crowd he was interested in delivering the words of life and then putting the impetus on us to say well what are you going to do about it here's who I am here's how eternal life is given how will you respond we don't get to judge the words of Christ but we all must respond to them all of us this morning have heard the word all of us this morning have heard my flesh is true food my blood is true drink whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him we have all heard forsake your sin turn to Christ and you will have eternal life we've heard it and the disciples have heard it my part is done how will you respond to the word of

Christ do you want to go away as well Peter as he often does he speaks up first doesn't he it's always a gamble with Peter he gets it right about 50% of the time but this time he gets it right he speaks the response of a true disciple of Christ listen to what he says in verse 68 Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that you are the holy one of God is this your response to the word of God where else can we go Lord where else can I go with my with my anxiousness you have the words of eternal life where else can I go with my troubled marriage Lord where else can I go you have the words of eternal life where else can I go with my with my suffering with my sickness

Lord where else can I go with my sin we've tried the world I've turned there I've been affirmed and wrapped up and spit up and chewed out by the world I've turned to myself and found it lacking I've turned everywhere else tried every flavor of bread the world has to offer none of it satisfies where else can we go Lord you alone have the words of eternal life is that the desire of your heart a few years ago Amanda took up a new hobby somebody had given her some sourdough starter bless them whoever that was and for a season our house was filled with bread loaves of bread big round I don't even know what you call them just bricks of bread rounds of bread she made sourdough cookies everything was sourdough and it was unreal I'll tell you what I never heard said in my house thanks for the offer I'm gonna go to the store get my own bread no we we wisely said I

[32 : 06] I want more when when can I have more give me another taste of that that's the good stuff give me some more why would I settle for less church the bread of life has come down from heaven all satisfying life giving true bread why would we settle for anything less feast your souls on Christ he offers himself fully to you this morning are you satisfied in him let's pray Lord we can't even begin to fathom the depth of the ways that you nourish our soul when we come to you so we pray father for those who have never turned to you who have never trusted in Christ we pray now would be the moment the spirit gives life and we pray for us who are constantly drawn towards other things

Lord even as we just sang we're prone to wonder Lord I feel it prone to leave the God I love here's our heart Lord take and seal it we pray help us to trust in Christ every moment and feast our souls on him we pray in Christ name amen