

Going There: Jesus Say What?!?!  
Week 5: Eat My Flesh and Drink My Blood

I. We're wrapping up a series of messages focusing on some of the hard sayings of Jesus. A lot of what Jesus said is fairly easy to get on board with. We can read through the gospels humming along but then on occasion these statements come out of Jesus' mouth that can leave us thinking:

[Slide]: Jesus say what?!?!?

A. We've looked at some of these seemingly odd statements that leave us wondering why Jesus went there? Some topics of discussion are generally avoided and the same held true for the 1st Century. But Jesus wasn't concerned about being politically correct. He loved people enough to present the truth. He says of Himself:

John 14:6 (CSB) [Slide]: 6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

1. That's a bold statement! But it encapsulates the reality that truth and love are always intertwined. Jesus isn't so much our buddy and get out of jail free card. He's our Savior and Lord. We follow Him and embrace the Kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of this world and that will always involve living a countercultural lifestyle. But that's the deal.

1 John 2:17 (CSB) [Slide]: 17 And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

2. Which kingdom are you latching onto today? Now that's a question worth pondering! We easily convince ourselves that we can straddle both kingdoms, but Jesus never presents that option. We fail forward by God's grace. But there must come a point when we humble ourselves before God, accept that we are hopeless sinners, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life!
3. Pastor, are you telling me that that good person down the street that isn't a Christian won't have eternal life? You mean to tell me the person who is devoted toward a religious system isn't going to inherit eternal life? The answer to those questions is that apart from Christ no one will enter eternal life even if that's viewed as intolerant. If that's the case, we've forgotten that truth and love are two sides to the same coin and Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. There is no other Name under heaven given to man by which we are saved. Today we're going to see that Jesus makes it abundantly clear: there is no option B. And do you know what? It was offensive in Jesus' day just like it is in ours. His own disciples respond by saying:

John 6:60 (CSB) [Slide]: 60 "This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?"

- a. The word used for "hard" doesn't mean difficult to comprehend. The Greek word Skleros means offensive. Jesus had just dropped a "say what?!?" moment and His own disciples found it to be offensive.

4. It begs the question, what in the world did Jesus say?

II. We're going to be looking at John chapter 6 today and primarily at a passage of Scripture formally known as:

[Slide]: The Bread of Life Discourse

A. It's a real "say what?!?" moment because Jesus lays out the essence of His earthly ministry. He lets all those in His midst know exactly the deal. Jesus came to point people to the Father but even more so:

[Slide]: To make the way to the Father!

1. We have a Core Value that says:

[Slide]: We Clear the Path to Jesus

- a. Why?

Because He's the only One who has cleared the path to the Father! There is no other way! And the path by which our salvation was achieved wasn't in line with the expectations or cultural norms during the days of Jesus' earthly ministry either. Conversely, it was downright offensive.

B. We need an entire sermon series on the Bread of Life Discourse which we'll do soon, but for today's purpose I want us to home in on this statement Jesus made that left people thinking, "Jesus had to go there?" So, let's start there and we'll unpack it.

John 6:53-58 (CSB) [Slide]: 53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. 54 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, 55 because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your ancestors ate- and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.”

1. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. Wow!! That is a “say what” moment!! Again, we know this was a “say what” moment, because if we read on through the rest of the chapter, we discover that this proclamation of Jesus was a deal breaker, not only for the crowd, but many of Jesus’ own disciples. Not the 12, but those beyond that who had been committed disciples up to this point, decided it was too much and walked away.

2. So, what’s the context for this saying deemed offensive by so many who heard that day?

a. Jesus dropped this saying in the Capernaum synagogue. Jesus was born on a road trip to Bethlehem, raised in no name Nazareth, but made His hub of ministry operations in Capernaum. Israel is a very small country. Nazareth and Capernaum are about 30 miles apart. So, think someone raised in Norfolk moving to Deep Creek. Jesus is in a very familiar place and sometimes familiarity can be an obstacle. It was here.

b. Secondly, the day prior was a highwater mark in Jesus’ ministry:

[Slide]: Feeding of the 5,000

In 6:4, John lets us know that the Feeding of the 5,000 happened at the time of Passover and if one intended to capitalize on the anticipation of a messiah, the Passover Festival was the chance to do it. Jesus did want the people to see and believe that He was the promised Messiah, but the Jewish people continued to show that their expectations of who the messiah would be, were not compatible with who Jesus actually was! To be clear, the Feeding of the 5,000 had a far more significant purpose than Jesus simply performing a miracle to provide a meal. It’s the Passover season, there’s a large crowd gathered in the wilderness, and they’re complaining about food! What’s the significance? This is:

[Slide]: The Exodus 2.0

(1) In response to the Feeding of the 5,000 there was a messianic fervor that erupted because the people recognized the point but made the wrong application. Jesus was One like Moses, anointed by God. Which to an extent was true, but in response to this event the people clamored to make Jesus their earthly king. Jesus recognized this and withdrew from the crowd. These events were less than 24 hours prior to the Bread of Life Discourse in the Capernaum Synagogue.

(2) The context for the Bread of Life Discourse is a large crowd actively looking for Jesus because they want another show. Remember, the 1st Century wasn’t a fun time to be a Jew. They occupied Israel which was good. At some points in their history, they had been captured and exported around the world, but during Jesus’ earthly ministry the Jews were in their homeland. But, and it’s a big but, they were under Roman control. Every day they were being punked out by the Romans and every day the Jewish expectation that God would send a king, i.e., a warrior to rectify the situation, got a little stronger. They believed the catalyst to God sending a warrior messiah was through their devout commitment to the Law.

3. Let’s pick up the conversation in verse 26:

John 6:26-27 (CSB) [Slide]: 26 Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. 27 Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him.”

a. In other words, the crowd showed back up infatuated with another gift while missing the awe of the One who gives! Life isn’t found in the sustenance but in the One who sustains! If we miss that most critical of

points, we miss everything. Eternal life is a gift from the Giver mediated through Jesus Christ who in this instance chooses to identify Himself as the Son of Man. That's a loaded term because it was used by the prophets of the Old Testament i.e., Daniel, to emphasize the coming One of God who would rule, and yet when Jesus used the term in identifying Himself it was closely associated with His suffering.

John 6:28 (CSB) [Slide]: 28 "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.

b. Hello!! It's like Jesus is speaking another language! Tell us what we need to do to the crowd asked. How do we:

[Slide]: Perform?

(1) Our guilt shouldn't send us to "got to's" but to grace. But doesn't that fight our human nature with everything in us? We're born with a sense of guilt because we all are. We've all sinned and come up short and we can try to mask that reality but it's impossible to do. We think the way we fix the problem is by performing but guilt can only be resolved through grace. Grace is a gift given by the Giver and mediated through our Lord Jesus Christ!

John 6:29 (CSB) [Slide]: 29 Jesus replied, "This is the work of God- that you believe in the one he has sent."

c. Guilt can only be absolved by grace! Believe in Me, the sent One from God! There're no "got to's" here. Don't you understand that eternal life is a gift from God, the Giver, and I am The Gift! You're clamoring over physical bread that's in and out, and all along the Sustainer of life is standing before you! See and believe!

John 6:30-31 (CSB) [Slide]: 30 "What sign, then, are you going to do so we may see and believe you?" they asked. "What are you going to perform? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

d. Did they really just ask Jesus for a sign? Now that should be the "say what?" moment! Not only do they ask for a sign, but they taunt Jesus about bread! It infuriates me so much when I read this because I see that same spirit alive and well today. I can be guilty. Sometimes Jesus says "no" to our prayers because He loves us too much to say "yes." When the gifts take precedent over the Giver they turn into a source of heartache and pain. Why? Because we're trying to extract life out of something that isn't designed to sustain life. There's only one source of life and that's the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus Christ.

John 6:32-34 (CSB) [Slide]: 32 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always."

e. Jesus is continually pushing into their misguided understanding, but it's like the crowd is looking through Jesus to locate the gift! They cease to recognize the Gift is standing before them! Jesus pushes in again and this time He's abundantly clear:

John 6:35-36 (CSB) [Slide]: 35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. 36 But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe."

f. Over the next few verses, the phrase I am the bread of life or something similar is mentioned 12 times! The crowd begins to understand what Jesus is implying. That He is the One sent from God to clear the path to eternal life. That life is given not achieved. The gift has come from God, flesh and blood that will be living bread and water for all who partake. The crowd begins to understand, but they will have no part in it! They know Jesus' parents and consider this whole thing to be foolishness. Jesus continues to push in and in verse 51 equates His flesh to the living bread. The response of the crowd in verse 52 is likely derogatory in nature: who does this guy think He is?

John 6:50-52 (CSB): 50 "This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 52 At that, the Jews argued among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

4. We come full circle to our "say what?" moment:

John 6:53-55 (CSB) [Slide]: 53 So Jesus said to them, “truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. 54 The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, 55 because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.

- a. Jesus looks out across the crowd that day and lets them know that everything is about to change. Everything in the entire cosmos has been brought together in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the very One standing in front of the crowd that day! They were clamoring for physical bread when God had sent the One from heaven to be our spiritual bread. The One who would clear the path to eternal life through His broken body and shed blood. Jesus was pointing to His impending sacrifice that day, but we look back on the sacrifice that’s already been accomplished. For us, the work has already been done. But it doesn’t become personally effectual until we are united into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b. Does that mean we literally eat the flesh and drink the blood? No that is to miss the point. Even transubstantiation or the idea that at the Lord’s Supper the bread and juice turn into the actual body and blood of Jesus, is to miss the point. Jesus isn’t talking in terms of the physical but in terms of the spiritual. Jesus is the only One who has cleared the path to the Father. The only way we are united with the Father is to be united with Christ. What does that mean? It means we consume Jesus Christ so much so that we are in Him, and He is in us like the very food that sustains our life.

A few chapters later, Jesus will describe this posture as:

[Slide]: Abiding

- (1) Abiding is to remain interconnected with another. When we believe by taking in or consuming the death and resurrection of our Lord, He fills us with His Spirit. Spiritual transformation always happens from the inside out because we first have to consume the death and resurrection of our Lord. As we yield to His Spirit our taste buds are changed. But it’s Christ in us! That’s the deal.
- c. The path to God has been cleared through Jesus Christ and we must be united with Him. Jesus is in us, and we are in Him in such a way it’s like food that gets consumed into our very cells. It’s why the Apostle Paul says, “to live is Christ!” The Christian life cannot be compartmentalized. We’re either in Christ or not and it begins by taking in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us the gift of His flesh and blood so that in Him we are made right with God.
- C. As the worship team comes and begins to play, we’re going to have a few moments to reflect on the magnitude of the gift. Today we’re going to celebrate communion as a symbol of the body and blood broken and shed to pay the penalty of our sins. If we are united with Christ in the likeness of His death we will certainly be united in the likeness of His resurrection. This isn’t about checking an intellectual box; this is about saying, “Jesus consume me as I consume You! I surrender my life into Your life as You have laid down Your life for mine!” Maybe today you might say, “I haven’t come to that kind of relationship with Jesus before.” Today is the day of salvation. Right now, you can pray and ask God to forgive you of your sins. Jesus has cleared the path to God through His death and resurrection, and we simply acknowledge that we unite our life in His life.
- D. As we enter this time of communion, let’s go before the Lord and pray.