

You Are What You Eat

2018-08-19 - Year B - Pentecost 8-14 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas
Proverbs 9:1–6; Psalm 147; Ephesians 5:15–20; John 6:53–59

Cannibalism

- v. 52 "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"
- These words about eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood would have been shocking to the hearers. John 6:66 Many disciples "turned back and no longer walked with him."
- Cannibalism in the OT
 - After the flood, Noah and his children were instructed that God had given them plants and animals to eat. But God instructed them not to eat flesh with its blood (Genesis 9:4)
 - Leviticus 17:10-14 - prohibition about eating or drinking blood.
 - The only places where cannibalism is mentioned are in the context of God's judgement, particularly in the siege of Jerusalem out of desperation.
- Romans would have been offended too: One of the charges they brought against the early church was cannibalism because they ate flesh and drank blood (in the Eucharist).
- Why was Jesus talking in this way? He was making a visceral point about the importance of being united to him, and he was pointing to the future institution of the sacrament of Communion where we eat his body and drink his blood.

Eucharist

- The synoptic Gospels all record Jesus instituting the sacrament of communion at the last supper. John is the only Gospel that does not report this episode. In the Gospel of John, this is the passage that people always turn to for theology about the Eucharist.
- What is the sacrament of communion?
- Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. They are physical things that we can taste and touch and see and interact with to give us an assurance that we have received the invisible grace that lies beneath the surface.
 - Sun Pass, when you go through the toll station a light lights up saying that you have paid the toll.
- Outward sign is bread and wine.
- **112. What is the inward and spiritual thing signified?** The spiritual thing signified is the body and blood of Christ, which are truly taken and received in the Lord's Supper by faith. (1 Corinthians 10:16-18; 11:27; John 6:52-56)¹
- **113. What benefits do you receive through partaking of this sacrament?** As my body is nourished by the bread and wine, I receive the strengthening and refreshing of my soul by the body and blood of Christ; and I receive the strengthening and refreshing of the love and unity I share with fellow Christians, with whom I am united in the one Body of Christ. (1662 Catechism)²

¹ To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism

² To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism

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- v. 55 "My flesh is true food..."
 - Jesus literally offers himself to us. Christ himself is really and truly present to us in this sacrament.
 - Just as a husband and wife offer themselves to one another and the two become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). So also, Jesus offers himself to us that we might become one with him.
 - Jesus is the bridegroom, and the church is his bride. Ephesians 5:31-32
- v. 56 Eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood is about abiding in him.
 - What does it mean to "abide" (or "remain" in the NIV)?
 - Greek word is "meno". Other ways to translate the word include "remain," "stay," and "reside."
 - When we abide in Christ, we reside in him and he in us. This is another way of saying that we, as Christians, have union with Christ.
 - CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: "If one joins two pieces of wax, one will see that one has become part of the other. In a similar manner, I suppose, the person who receives the flesh of our Savior Christ and drinks his precious blood ... shall be one with him." (COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 4.2.)³
 - This union is first achieved through Baptism. But it is continued and renewed, week by week, in the sacrament of Communion.
 - Each time we receive, we are recommitting our lives to him. This is not unlike the altar call in the Baptist tradition.
- When I pray after receiving communion, I usually say something like this: "Lord Jesus, thank you for feeding me with your body and blood. Help me to decrease and you to increase (John 3:30) so that I may no longer live, but you would live in me (Galatians 2:20). By the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father."
- Feeding on Jesus helps us to become like Jesus. You are what you eat!

The Bread of Life

- v. 53 - "Unless you eat...and drink...you have no life in you."
 - Jesus is the only source of life for us. Apart from him we are dead.
 - What happens when you stop eating? Eventually you die.
 - Those who eat Jesus' flesh, who are united with Christ, will have "eternal life." And Jesus will "raise him up on the last day." (v. 54).
- v. 57-58 - Eternal food for eternal life.
 - Jesus' life comes from the father, and our life comes from Jesus.
 - When we feed on Jesus we will have eternal life!
- John 6:67-69 - Peter says "You have the words of eternal life."

³ Joel C. Elowsky, ed., John 1–10 (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 241.