

Eat My Flesh, Drink My Blood

Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh
of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you have no life in you.

We're so used to that kind of talk in the church. But let's stop for a second, and really hear this:

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood
have eternal life.

Flesh eating? Blood drinking? That's a bit of a horror. 'Gospel according to Stephen King.'

Back in Massachusetts, in my old home church, there was a young girl, 10 or so, named Amy. A little, red-haired, freckled cherub. Cutest thing you could imagine. And the best *evangelist* I knew.

Every week she brought some friend from school or somewhere. A new face in church all the time—it was awesome. Well, one bright Sunday morning, a few years ago, I was serving as a worship assistant there. And at the Communion I held the chalice, offered the sacrament... *Blood of Christ, shed for you. Blood of Christ, shed for you.*

And then little Amy stepped up, her visitor friend in line behind her. Amy stretched out her small hands, and lifted a truly expectant gaze to the cup. Her seriousness was touching. And, warmed inside, I smiled, and with all reverence said,

'Amy, *this is* the blood of Christ, shed for you.'

And suddenly, that graceful, sacred moment was shattered, as the girl behind her shouted,

'Eeww, that's gross!!!'

And it was *loud*. We were all slightly horrified. Not just for the disruption. But because we realized what had freaked her out. I think, for all of us that day, the blood glistened in the cup a bit more red.

More red, and more real. Maybe too real for some.

Eat my flesh, drink my blood.

That was too real for many of Jesus' listeners.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying,
'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

That word ‘disputed’ there? In Greek, it doesn’t mean a calm, cerebral debate. These guys are freaking out. They’re angry and appalled. This is 2,000 years ago—folks are literal-minded. They hear Jesus’ words,, the same way Amy’s young friend did. But, that’s *exactly* what Jesus wants. Why he’s so graphic and concrete. He wants them to really *get* the incarnation. He wants us to *get* the truth of God’s presence:

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. I am God. But make no mistake... I have come in flesh and blood. I’m not just words in a prophecy. I’m not a symbol and I’m not just Spirit.

I am the Messiah come from God. And I’m real. Real, and right here with you.

But, to these particular Jews, these Pharisees, so well-versed in the Torah and the law, this is scandalous. It’s too much. It’s grotesque and cannibalistic. But worse, so much worse to them...

It’s against Jewish law.

All the way back in Genesis, God decrees, ‘You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.’

To them, Jesus’ words would have been blasphemous, even if he was just talking about animal blood.

But there’s even more to this abomination. Because this isn’t just food law. Jewish tradition forbids humans from consuming blood, for a very specific religious reason: Blood is reserved for God. Solely for God. Blood is life. Life comes from God alone, so it belongs to God alone. Back then, animals were sacrificed for worship, and their blood was splashed on the altar. It was consecrated, and offered to God.

Eat my flesh, drink my blood.

Jesus is making a stunning offer herw. An invitation that knocks the Pharisees for a loop.

By offering blood, he invites us *to do what **God** does*. Because to receive blood, is to be *like God*.

Anybody remember what the very first sin perpetrated by mankind was? Adam and Eve? Forbidden fruit? Tree of Knowledge? *The #1 sin, was trying to be like God!*

‘The Jews disputed among themselves’—I’ll bet they did!

Jesus invites them to participate in the sin that brought on the crushing downfall of all humanity!

God has a wonderful sense of irony.

Jesus invites us to take part in the life that God lives. But there is no sin in it now.

Because Christ is the Messiah, and has come to reconcile us to God. To overturn all the darkness our sin has brought us. To give us new life. New life in him. In his body, and in his blood.

And that’s really what this is all about: Life.

Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Our Savior says *take me, flesh and blood*.

In the ancient Mediterranean ‘flesh and blood’ was an idiom. One’s ‘flesh’ meant the whole self, the whole person. And ‘blood’ meant life. Jesus says *take me, flesh and blood*:

Eat my whole being. Drink my whole life. I will abide in you. I will fill you with my life. God’s life. Eternal life. I will fill you with a whole new life. One that starts right now. A life magnified by grace: A life that doesn’t tremble before the face of death. A life eased with peace, even at the toughest of times. A life that doesn’t take itself too seriously; but knows the deep laughter that bubbles from the soul. A life that delights in feeding another, *first*. A life that sees and feels God everywhere. And nowhere more strongly than *right in here, inside ourselves*.

It’s all about life.

Jesus said, eat and drink of me: because if you don’t have *my* life in you, you don’t have *life* in you. My flesh is true food, my blood is true drink. Anything else isn’t true life. Anything else is just surviving. Just scratching manna from the ground, day after day, to stay alive. For a while.

Eat my flesh, drink my blood.

Jesus invites you to be wholly filled with his life. But I have to tell you, it won’t happen if you take polite little bites of Christ. *Trogeo*. *Trogeo* is the Greek word translated here as ‘eat.’

The translators were being polite.

Because that Greek word means to chew, literally, to *gnaw* on something.

Christ invites us to dig in, and gobble up his life with relish.

Christ calls us to take part in this new life with intent, focus, and energy.

To receive grace in great ravenous gulps.

Christ sets before us a banquet of limitless possibilities.

I hope you’re hungry.

Amen.