

John 6

by Keith Price

The sermon emphasizes the importance of checking our motives and priorities in life and coming to know Jesus as the bread of life in order to grow as a Christian.

Duration: 41:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 6:40, John 6:48-56

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the feeding of the 5,000, which is one of the miracles performed by Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the importance of learning from this miracle and growing as Christians. The preacher shares three ways in which believers can grow during the summer months, when they may be more relaxed in their spiritual disciplines. The sermon encourages believers to stay committed to reading the Bible, praying, and serving in the church, even during the summer season.

Transcript

Those wonderful situations, that's what we're talking about. And God wants to use your life. If you're a Christian, how are you growing into that? I wonder if we've been sitting around for years and we can look back and say, well now, what has happened in the last five years? We haven't done it quite as much lately, but during our lives, from time to time, Rosemary and I would sit down over a second cup of coffee and say, well, I'd say, tell me, have I grown? I mean, not am I groaning, but have I grown in Christ? And what about you, dear? Now, the trouble is, I always know she grows because I'm away such a lot, she has time to grow near to the Lord.

I'm away a lot, but when I come back, I've been involved in programs and in preaching and teaching, but I wonder if I've really grown myself. And we sort of question one another, and we sort of just say, well, if I think I've grown, how have I grown? Let me ask you, since January the 1st, since we had that big band shell there, out there on the night of January the 1st for Y2K, and maybe many of you were here, how much have you grown in the Lord? How different are you today from what you were then? You say, well, I am different. All right, but how? I love to think I'm different, but how am I different? In what areas have I grown? That's what I want us to think about this morning as we turn to our passage in John's Gospel, chapter six.

And if you've got a Bible, or if you don't have one with you, then on page 764 in your pew Bible, you'll find John chapter six. I'm going to read the wonderful, wonderful parable, or rather miracle, of Jesus feeding

the 5,000. You know, other than the resurrection, this is the only miracle that's recorded in all four Gospels.

So let me read it to you from the New International Version. Chapter six of John. Sometime after this, which is John's way, looking back over several decades, perhaps thinking, well, it all seems the same time now, but really it probably was some days or some weeks.

And chapter five starts that way sometime later. Chapter six starts that way sometime later, or sometime after this. And then chapter seven starts very similarly, too, after this.

So you see, he's crowding it all in, frankly. And most of John's Gospel, though, is to do with the last few weeks of Jesus' life. But here he's put these seven miracles that are here in John's Gospel.

And seven parables. And those parables begin with, I am. Jesus is saying, I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world. I am the door of the sheep. I am the good shepherd.

He's saying, I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the true vine.

And each one of those is a parable, an earthly story, or an earthly image with a heavenly meaning. Now there are seven miracles, too. And if you look at this one this morning, I believe this is the fourth one.

And here we come to it, and we're gonna see the feeding of the 5,000. Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. That's the Sea of Tiberias.

And a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover feast was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, where shall we buy bread for these people to eat? He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, eight months' wages wouldn't buy enough bread for each one to have a bite. Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who was always finding somebody else, wasn't he? He spoke up.

Here's a boy with five small barley loaves and a couple of sardines. How, well, it doesn't say that, but that's the idea. But how far will they go among so many? Jesus said, have the people sit down.

There was plenty of grass in that place, which if you've been in Israel, you know that's quite unusual. And the men sat down, about 5,000 of them. That's besides women and children.

Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. And he did the same with the fish. When they'd all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, now gather up the pieces that are left over.

Let nothing be wasted. So they gathered them and filled 12 baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world.

They knew from the Old Testament that was to happen. Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. Now that's the miracle on which this whole chapter is built.

There are 70-odd verses in it. That's a long chapter, some 71 verses. And indeed, we won't be able to cover the whole lot, but I'm gonna give you the gist of it.

What I'm going to do this morning is I want to share with us three ways that during these summer months, when we kind of take it easier, when we don't quite live up to our usual disciplines and diligence in getting into the word and talking to the Lord about other people. And then, of course, Labor Day comes and everybody wants new people to start in the various ministries of the church, because January the 1st may be the beginning of the calendar year, but Labor Day is the beginning of the church year. And that's when all the new programs start.

And we need new people to just man those programs. And as we do, of course, we find people are only half-hearted, less hearted than they were at the beginning of the summer, because the summer, somehow we've let things slip. So let me suggest you three ways in which we can grow as a Christian this summer.

If you haven't already had your holiday, then the summer's to come. If you've had your holiday, then we're almost in the fall. So don't worry, you get ready anyway in these weeks.

And here's the first one, the first way in which we can grow by learning from the miracle. And what I want us to learn from this miracle is not the obvious lessons, such as verse eight, you know, little as much when God is in it. That's a wonderful principle to learn, isn't it? Sister Abigail of Buffalo, a hundred years ago, used to say that.

If you had a whole hour and someone wanted half an hour, you give them the half, and God would let you do in the other half more than you would have done in the whole hour. If you only had a dollar and someone wanted 50 cents, you give it to them, and God would make the 50 cents go further than the whole dollar. What if you hadn't given it? Little as much when God is in it.

Five small barley loaves and two small fish. How far will they go among so many? No problem, said Jesus. He multiplies it.

And what we give to him, he multiplies. Not only that, but in verse 12, after it was all over, he said, now gather up the pieces. I mean, if you could do that, would you say now gather up the pieces, take a basket each and 12 of you men, you go down and 12 full baskets, let nothing be wasted.

For God is a generous God, but he doesn't waste his resources. Oftentimes we need those resources and God moves into our lives when we need them. Other times we don't sense our need of those.

God knows what is needed and he knows exactly when to give it and when what it is left over to make sure that nothing's wasted. And notice in verse 15, that Jesus knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force. If you had a man that would save you from the Romans and when you didn't have to go out to work, you just sit down on the grass and this man would take a couple of rows and got enough to eat.

I mean, wouldn't you want to make him king? This is terrific, our economy will be fantastic. But Jesus knowing for the wrong reasons, they intended to come and make him king by force and before his hour

had come, his time had come because he knew what he had to do and he knew he had to go to the cross. Therefore, he withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

How wonderful, rather than seeking position, here's one that says, no, I don't want to seek that position. So those are the obvious lessons, but here's the lesson I want us to learn from the miracle. The lesson is this, it's about our motives and our priorities.

And it's about why we go to church and it's about why we say that we're a Christian. It's about why we say, well, we'll go through the usual rituals and routines. What is our motive? What is our purpose in that? What happened is after this miracle, Jesus went up to the mountain and I want you to notice then, when evening came, the disciples went down to the lake and they were in a storm and there was another miracle took place.

Then you get to verse 25, when they found Jesus on the other side of the lake, or rather, let me read verse 24. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there because they'd gone looking for him, they'd slept all night. Imagine thousands of people sleeping on the hillside all night because they wouldn't want to leave Jesus go.

When they realized they weren't there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum. It's where Jesus spent a lot of time in search of Jesus. Now, verse 25, when they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, Rabbi, when did you get here? These are the two verses I want you to look at, 26 and 27.

They'd said, Rabbi, when did you get here? Jesus said at 11 o'clock last night, oh, I just came five minutes ago. Doesn't say that. In fact, he was rather like what Dr. Tozer used to do to me.

He used to ask him questions. He never answered my questions. He had his own agenda.

He knew what I needed better than what I wanted to know. So Jesus, they said, when did you get here? Jesus answered them. Answer, some answer.

I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the son of man, his favorite expression for himself, will give you. On him, God the father has placed a seal of approval.

So Jesus was saying, now what are your priorities? You know why you've come here. Do you think it's because yesterday I did this miracle and you sat there on the grass, so pondering who this man was that you let the bread and the fishes pass by you completely forgot about them. In fact, you went to sleep last night and you realized you hadn't eaten all day because you were pondering over who this man was.

All the miracles you do, nobody can do these, said Nicodemus in chapter three, unless God be with him. So this one they felt had come from God. No, they didn't, because all they were interested in is eating.

And Jesus knew their motive. And he said, you're looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life.

I suggest that the first way we will grow, particularly if we're not yet a Christian, but those who are too, is that we better check on our motives and our priorities. What are our priorities in life? If we come to this

church or another church, or if we come to the Bible and read it, or if we say that we're a Christian, what is our primary motive? What is it that we want from this? Jesus said, look at you people, 5,000 men, what you wanted was all the material things. You wanted the things to satisfy temporal needs.

You weren't interested in who I was or the things to do with eternity. You were only interested in those, in the temporal things. I was reading William Temple, previous Archbishop of Canterbury, who made this statement about this.

If what is eternal is valued chiefly as a means to any temporal result, the true order is inverted. And it is likely that the eternal and the temporal goods will be missed alike. Got that? When you take the eternal things of God, the Christian gospel, the purpose for Jesus coming, to give us eternal life, and you turn it around and you make your major goal something that will satisfy temporary needs, you not only don't get those temporary needs met, but also you miss the eternal.

I think that's tremendously important. And I think there are lessons for us to learn. For example, I recall many years ago when I was a young Christian, reading of the previous century and how many Christian leaders had said, yes, we must send missionaries into the world to establish and to consolidate the British Empire and the Commonwealth and so on.

We need to consolidate in these places. So what they were wanting to do was to take the Christian gospel as a means to satisfy their temporary longings. I know many churches being a professional church hopper, which I shall resume in a month or so.

I know many churches who have many businessmen in them, insurance fields and real estate fields and other sales fields and many other different aspects of life, who have told me, as I have counseled them, that their major goal in being in that church or that church or this church is that they may get contacts, contacts in order that their business dealings will be furthered. That's taking the eternal things of God and turning them around to primarily move towards the satisfaction of the temporal. There are other people who have had a terminal sickness, which has turned out not to be terminal, at least not yet.

And whereas they may be in remission, three or four years have gone by, but they make sure that they would come to church primarily because I don't want God now to smite me. I want God to know that I really want to put him first, but the primary goal can be for my own life and my own health. Young people be very careful of always saying, well, I know God is good because he's given me all that I asked him for.

God is good and God does give us as a bonus all kinds of things that are good for us in our lives. But if that's the primary way in which we judge whether the gospel is right, it's wrong, because that's purely secondary. The primary thing are the eternal goals, knowing who God is, knowing that Jesus is the son of God who came into the world to give his life for me.

These are the major goals. I wonder whether then you pursue Jesus Christ. Not in the way these people did, but in order to further eternal ends, in order to give glory to God, to build up your life in order that others may be blessed through it.

After all, I've told some of you before about the mirrors, the way I used to look at our daughters looking in the mirror. I used to think when they were growing up, if only they would spend as much time in looking in the mirror of their soul as they do in the mirror of the body. The sun was just as bad too.

But looking in the mirror of the body, looking in the mirror of the soul, looking down to see the windows of the soul, the eye, but seeing the mirror to tell me what's inside and to learn all about it, to feed off the living bread, as we'll see in a moment or two. Not only that, but if they would spend as much time in eternal things as they did in temporal things, and that's our great need, isn't it? We tend to do that. Oh, do you have a time with God? Do you know, 50 years ago, every self-respecting Christian used to have what we called a quiet time, or we used to call it the morning watch.

And we used to have that time with God. Now I'm convinced not more than three out of 10 Christians that I know have any regular time with God, whether it's morning, midday, or evening. Somehow or other, those things have gone out of the window because of the pressures of life.

Oh, if only we could say, Lord, I'm as determined to make sure I feed on you and spend time looking upon you and gazing upon you. I want to spend time building up my spiritual life and reading of how to do it in your word and praying to you and interceding for others. Lord, I'm going to spend as much time on that as I do on material and physical things.

That then is our first lesson. We grow by learning from the miracle, and the lesson from the miracle, it's not those obvious ones I went over first, but the lesson for us is to check up on our priorities, whether they are temporal or truly eternal. Now then, if you've done that, then we'll move on to the second stage for the second lesson that we've got to learn, or the second way in which we grow is not only by learning from the miracle, but by coming to the cross.

By coming to the cross, that's the place where Jesus died 2,000 years ago, and it's as fresh as if it just happened. You say, but the cross isn't mentioned here. Oh, yes, it is, but you have to read between the lines and see what Jesus means here.

But I want you to notice what it says from verse 28 onwards. Now that Jesus has put them on the spot to make them realize that they come for the wrong purpose, he says, all right, this is what you need to do, work for eternal life. In verse 28, then they asked him, what must we do to do the works God requires? What are the things we'll do? All right, we'll run around here, we'll do that, we'll get involved in all kinds of programs, and we'll do that.

He said, what you must do is this. The work of God, verse 29, is to believe in the one he has sent. Now, isn't that a letter? You say, that's such a letter.

I want to do something, I'm a doer. I want to earn this salvation. If Jesus came down so that we may have our sins forgiven, and God is gracious enough to forgive me my sins with all my past life, I want to feel that I've deserved it.

I want to feel I've done something for it. I want to do some work. And somehow or other, many of us wouldn't mind working hard every day for five years if we could be assured of that.

But God says, it's no good, you can't work for that. No matter what you do, you can't pay for the past, and you can't earn your way to heaven. It's not by works of righteousness, which we have done, it's according to God's mercy.

Therefore, God says, look, that's why I've come in the person of Jesus, to go to the cross to die instead of your sin. And when I want you to believe on me as the work that you will do, I want you to believe that I am the Christ, the son of the living God, Jesus would say, and that I'm going to the cross in order to bear the

penalty of your sin and mine. Therefore, he says, all right, the work of God is to believe in the one he has sent.

Look again at verse 35 to 38. He says, for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives his life to the world. That's Jesus himself.

So they don't understand this. And sir, they said, from now on, give us this bread. Then he has to spell it out and say who he is.

And look at this marvelous verse. This is the first of the seven parables of the gospel. Then Jesus declared, I am, with a special formula, which represents the divine formula for the name of Jehovah, the name of Yahweh.

This isn't the ordinary word that would be used for I am. You could get rid of that in one word in the language in which this book was written, but he's put an extra pronoun in that is the divine formula, making them sit up and saying he's claiming to be God. I am is the bread of life.

That's the idea. I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

So there's the great statement Jesus is saying now. I want you now to believe, and you must come to me because I'm the bread of life. But you say, how in the world, Lord, will you make it so that we'll never go hungry and never go thirsty? Well, of course, he's going to go to the cross and they'll soon understand that a little later.

But what he means is this. Within you will be the source of this resource. Within you will be the fountain, will be the spring of living water.

Within you will be the total resource, all you need to sustain you in life. You'll never go hungry. You'll have to eat from it.

You'll have to drink from it. You can't sit back and say, well, how come I'm hungry? You've got to take some action there. But within you will be the very source of this.

And he says, I'm the bread of life. Therefore, if I come to live in you, and he'll tell us how to do that in a moment or two, if I come to live in you, then you will constantly feed on me. And I'm the bread of life, and you'll never go hungry and you'll never go thirsty.

But then they say, well, what do we do? I mean, how do we get to that situation? You say, I've never been like that. It sounds terrific. Well, he says in verse 40, for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son, that's Jesus, and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Notice the word looks. For my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son or beholds the son as your pew Bible has, beholding him, looking to him. Now, as Jewish people would hear this, what would they think about? They'd think way back to Numbers 21 in the Old Testament, one of the books of Moses, the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, and they'd sinned against God and grumbled against him, and God had brought punishment upon them.

Many of them were dying because there were snakes in the camp and they were being bitten, bitten. God said to Moses, all right, they've cried out to me and you've cried out to me. This is what you're to do.

Make a snake, a serpent of bronze, and I want you to put it up on a pole, and I want you to tell everybody, even though they feel so sick and so unwell, all they've got to do is just turn their head and look at that pole, and as they look at that post and they see that bronze serpent on there, I will immediately heal them. Well, a lot of people didn't. Come on, I don't go for that stuff, they say.

That's what a lot of people say about looking to Jesus Christ upon the cross. For as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, we saw in John chapter three, so the Son of Man, Jesus, will be lifted up on a cross. That means that just as those people turned, if they would turn and say, I believe that what God says is true, I can't understand it, but he told me if I have enough faith in what he says, that I turn to that bronze serpent and I look at it, he will heal me.

Similarly, if I turn in faith, even though I can't understand it, to Jesus dying on the cross, he will heal me of my sin. He will forgive me of my sin. He will give me something else that's going to enable me to carry on.

We'll see in a moment or two, but here we are. This is the marvelous lesson that we've got from here. So the first lesson, the first way in which we're to grow this summer is by learning from the miracle to determine what our priorities in life are.

Are they temporal or are they eternal? The second thing, we grow by coming to the cross. And as we make our way in repentance, in faith, that means believing, and we look up into the dying Christ on the cross, where he's dying for my sin, I say, Lord, you told me if I will look, I will live. And I'm looking at him and I'm saying, he's taking my place.

The penalty for my sin is being given upon him. Now, Lord, that means that I am free because you won't demand the two of us pay. God says, that's right.

That's the beginning of the Christian life. And if you thought you were a Christian before and you'd come to church all your life and you've been baptized and so on, and you've gone through all these things, but you'd never come face to face with Jesus on the cross, this, when you look the first time and ask God to pardon your sin, ask God to make you one of his family, one of his children, he will do it like that. That's the start.

That's the triggering mechanism. That's Christian conversion. That's becoming a Christian.

That's getting saved. That's being born all over. That's being born again.

It's being born from above. All of these different expressions are used in the scripture, but that's the start. You can't become a Christian unless you come to the cross.

But look at the third and final way in which we grow. First, we grow by learning from the miracle. Second, we grow by coming to the cross.

But thirdly, we grow by feeding on the Christ. By feeding on the Christ. Now, hold your horses for a moment.

If that upsets you, just wait. You'll be all right when I finish, but just don't think of it too much in the way that some of you may. By feeding on the Christ.

I want us to read from verse 48 down to verse 56. And I want you to notice, as I read it, three things. I want you to notice that the word eat, or ate, occurs six times in six consecutive verses.

49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54. Secondly, I want you to notice what we eat. The word flesh occurs in six consecutive verses.

51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56. Thirdly, I want you to notice the word blood occurs in four consecutive verses. 53, 54, 55, and 56.

So notice those three words. Notice the word eat. Notice the word flesh.

Notice the word blood. Because you may learn something this morning that many of you have never understood before. 48, I am, says Jesus, the bread of life.

Your forefathers, speaking of the Old Testament, the ones that were under Moses, ate the manna in the desert. God supplied it daily, miraculously, from heaven. Yet they died, because it was only temporal stuff, not eternal stuff.

But, verse 50, here is the bread, pointing to himself, here is the bread that comes down from heaven, for he is God, which a man or a woman may eat and not die, never die. Verse 51, I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, that if he partakes of me, he will live forever.

This bread is, and here he introduces the second word, my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Oh my, they can't understand it. At this point, they were utterly repulsed by the whole thing.

It was revolting to think of this. In fact, it says in verse 52, then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, how can this man give us a flesh to eat? In fact, in verse 66, which you don't have on the screen, it says, from this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him, because this was a hard saying. So then look at verse 53.

Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. All three occur in that verse. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. I don't blame you if you don't understand God, you don't understand the Bible, and this is the first time you've been in church for a long time.

I wouldn't blame you if I saw you standing up right now and going up the aisle saying, what in the world am I listening to? Indeed, that's the normal reaction that we would get, isn't it? But you see, there's a special marvelous meaning here. We're not going to literally drink blood or literally eat some flesh in that sense, of course not. Jesus is speaking symbolically.

He's using figurative language here, but he's using the kind of language that those Jewish people would fully understand. This applies to two areas now of our lives. For the third thing, after we must learn from the miracle, it's by learning from the miracle, it's by coming to the cross, but by feeding on the Christ.

The third thing, this application of feeding on the Christ, it's applied in two different areas now of our lives from here on. First of all, it has its application, although indirectly, and it wasn't primarily meant, I don't think at this point, it's the indirect application to the Lord's supper, to the Lord's table, to the Eucharist, to the communion table. Secondly, it has its application to every day of our lives and every moment of every day, that in both the Lord's table and in every moment of our lives, we will eat his flesh and drink his blood

in the way Jesus meant it.

So these verses tell us many, many times, all the way through us, we've been seeing what that means. Now, let me talk about the Lord's table, first of all. Communion service.

There's no magic about it. When you actually sit down in church and you couldn't care less about God, and for some reason you were allowed to partake of the bread, and that decision is primarily up to you because only you and God know what you are like. He knows whether you're a Christian or not.

If you are a Christian, even if there's something between you and God, you've got to eat it by examining yourself. And as you examine yourself, hopefully you will put things right. But as you do that, you will eat it.

As you eat that bread, you say, well, it's all right. There's plenty wrong. I didn't put anything right, but I ate the bread, so fine now.

Fine, poppycock. Nothing fine about that. That's not going to do anything to you.

There's no magic in the essence of the bread. It's ordinary bread. It's ordinary bread.

Some Christian traditions teach the doctrine of transubstantiation. That's an awful long word, but it really means across trans substance, that the substance changes across, that it means that once that bread is blessed and consecrated, it becomes the body of Christ. So that whether anything else happens in your life or not, or whether you're inwardly feeding on him or not, it doesn't matter.

You've eaten that and that's it. We don't believe that because we don't find that in scripture. Then another halfway to that doctrine is a doctrine of consubstantiation.

Well, it doesn't really become, it's nothing to do with the priest doing that, but really when that bread touches your lips, as it mixes with your saliva at that moment, it becomes the body of Christ and therefore you get fed inwardly and spiritually. No, you don't. Not unless you're feeding inwardly on him.

You've heard of the expression in the Latin, this is my body. Hoc est corpus meum. Hoc est corpus meum.

Well, when that was said, it sounded like it was all magic and it all became the body of Christ. Hoc est corpus meum. So we came to the word, not hoc est corpus, but hoc est pocus and that's how we got our word.

That's how we got our word. That's where it came from. You look up at any good derivative book and you'll find that that's where it came from.

There's no magic about that at all. Nothing happens to it. It's the actual bread.

It's a symbol. It's a symbol of Jesus' flesh. This is what we would call, now we call the, oh, I can't get into this.

My time is gone, but we can't get into it in too much detail, but let me say, we call these the ordinances of the Christian church. Most Protestant denominations have two ordinances. Catholics have seven.

The Protestants have, of course, the Lord's Supper and baptism. We don't happen to think that the bread is anything special. It is ordinary bread.

We don't happen to think that that water is anything special. Unless somebody forgot to turn the warm on and it's freezing cold, then it would be special to you, but there's nothing special about that. It's ordinary water and ordinary bread.

So instead of sacramentalists speaking of them as if that is sacred and this is sacred, that that's not all that the word means. We took it so that the thing itself became sacred and you wouldn't touch that water and you wouldn't touch that bread because those were sacred things. They're ordinary things as far as I understand scripture, but God uses the outward earthly symbol in order to teach us an inward and spiritual experience that we need to go through.

So the flesh and the blood we speak of are represented by the bread and the wine at the Lord's table. Now then, what you've probably done is you've partaken of the Lord's supper and you've drunk, you've eaten the bread and drunk from the wine, from the cup. You're saying, well, both of these remind me of his death on the cross.

And that's true, they do. Because after all, he did give of his body and he did shed his blood. But really the primary way that Jesus is speaking is that there are two opposites there.

It means that the bread represents his flesh crucified. It's dead flesh. And it's his death that paid the price for my sin.

God paid that price, Christ paid that price, and therefore I can be free as I trust him. It speaks of his death. But the blood, the blood speaks of his life.

For the life of the body is in the blood. And if you read in the Old Testament, the Jews were forbidden from eating blood with flesh for the simple reason that it was all right to eat the flesh when it was dead. But frankly, it wasn't all right to drink the blood because it says in Deuteronomy 12 and in Leviticus 17 and in other passages, for the life of the animal is in the blood.

And you're not allowed to drink that because that means you're gonna have that life coming into you. Now, for the very reason that the Jews could not drink the blood, Jesus says, I want you to drink the blood because his life is in that blood. And he wants you symbolically, figuratively to drink of that blood.

In other words, to say, when I come to the Lord's table, that bread represents his death for me. But that blood represents his life now coming to my being. So not only is my past forgiven and dealt with, but now the future is taken care of.

Not only is the substitution taken place, he died for me, that's the bread, but now the sustenance is here. He's poured his life into me. And the Spirit of God is continually ministering to me the resurrection life of Christ.

So the true thoughts are always there. And that's what Jesus is getting at here. And when we come to transfer that into daily life, into daily life, we must constantly eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus in that figurative sense.

Constantly ponder his death as a substitute for me. Constantly ponder the lifeblood as that which now comes coursing through my spiritual veins and arteries to give me the ability and the wherewithal and the resources to live the Christian life, a life that may please him. So I take Galatians 2.20. I am crucified with Christ.

So here's the bread. Christ died for me, I died with Christ. That's death.

When you think of the bread, you think of that. He died for me, I really died to myself with him because I said no to my own rights from that point. But when you take that cup or other, only of course in my mind, this isn't at the Lord's Supper now, this is living daily.

But you can imagine yourself in your mind drinking the blood. In other words, each day, not only pondering the death of Christ and what it meant, but pondering the life of Christ that's now being given to me. For the Father has given him life, the scripture says in John's Gospel.

He'd come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. That's the life with a capital L I keep talking about. And that now is coursing through all of your veins and arteries if you're a Christian.

So at the Lord's table and day by day, we need to ponder his death and to ponder his life. And as we do, we say, Lord, thank you for taking care of the past. That's what the main message of the Christian Gospel is all about.

Thank you for taking care of my future on earth because you're gonna give me the power now to live the life which will please you because I certainly don't have that power. I wonder this morning then if there's going to be growth in your life this summer. If you'd like to start seriously making sure that between now and Labor Day, each day you grow.

First, come to the Lord's table whenever we have the communion service. And then secondly, each day, I want you to take Galatians 2.20 and say, I want to remember that by remembering the bread and the wine, even though I'm not partaking of them, remembering his flesh and his blood given for me. So what I want to do this morning is now as we're concluding because we're late, we're running late this morning, but we wanted to.

We wanted to give you all that wonderful news that we had this morning. But right now we're going to have a communion service. Oh, don't get up and leave.

It's not going to take more than three minutes. This likely will be the first communion service that you have had without literal bread and wine. In fact, I've not had a communion service in a church service without bread and wine before.

And that's going back a long time, 150 years. But here now, I want us this morning to imagine that the bread and the wine is there and that Jesus himself is walking down the aisle by you and he's offering you the bread. He's offering you his flesh.

He's offering you his sacrificial death, the crucified Christ on the cross to pay for your sin. And then he's going to come and he's going to offer you his life. He says, now my life will be in you and you must drink my blood.

Again, figuratively and thinking of it so that when we come to actually partake of the Lord's supper at other times, and I'm not suggesting you do it like this in church all the time, or we lose the outward and soon forget the inward meaning. No, no, no, the outward is important. This you should have done and not to left the other undone.

So we've got to do both. But this morning, maybe just once, I want you to take half a minute. I want you now to imagine Jesus coming down the aisle and giving you the bread.

And he says, this is truly my body, my flesh crucified, given on your behalf. And I want you to ponder him and then we'll do the same with the wine. Would you do that right now? I'll give you half a minute.

And you thank him and feed inwardly on him. And if you've never appropriated his death to you before, this is a great time to do it. Say, Lord, I've never understood, but now I know you are my substitute and I take you as my savior.

This is for your crucifixion, giving your body, your flesh to be put to death on the cross that we may receive forgiveness of sin. Amen. And now he's going to come down the aisle again.

And he's going to offer you the cup, the fruit of the vine. You are in your mind going to drink from it, but it doesn't matter that you're not actually drinking from it because the main thing is that you feed inwardly on the bread and that in your mind and in your heart, you accept and appropriate this divine life that Jesus has now given you, represented by the cup, by his blood. And I want you to take that half a minute.

And as you do and ask Paul just to play quietly, maybe that'll help us just ponder and think about what it means now for me to have the life of Jesus in my life and then thank him for both of those. Will you do that? Let me give you half a minute. Thank you so much, Lord Jesus, for giving your life for us.

Dying, having your life at such a young age snuffed out that we may be freed from our sin. Thank you now, Lord Jesus, that we can face the future, not only having had your life substituted for ours, but now having your life blood within us figuratively, sustaining us, enabling us to live the life that now you call us to live. So we give you thanks, Lord.

We pray that these three means of growing, learning the lesson of the miracle that the eternal is more important than the temporal, coming to the foot of your cross to become a Christian, and then day by day, feeding on you, appropriating your death and your life so that we may be saved. We thank you for this, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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