



**St Matthew's Holland Park
Weekly Bulletin 18th August
2024**

*This week's Revd. Morris' message: **What does 'eating Jesus flesh and drinking His blood' mean to you?***

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues His discourse with the Jews that we have been following for the last 2 weeks and stretches His **'I AM the LIVING Bread'** metaphor still further declaring that :*'Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood, you can not have eternal life within you. **But anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the Last Day'** [vs.53 and 54]* Well, what would his first hearers make of all that? It's not an invitation to cannibalism! This reading poses many deep theological concepts and metaphors worthy of close meditative reflection and study. So, here are a few *thought starters* for you :

1. Perhaps these verses seek to stress upon us Jesus' **Incarnation** [from the latin '*Carne*' meaning *flesh suitable for human consumption*] E.G. in John 1:14 .. *The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us ...*] Some folks mistakenly thought that Jesus, as God, couldn't possibly have a sinful human body - He is too pure! Perhaps John was wanting to stress Jesus' enfleshment to correct this view?
2. The verses also use overtly **Sacrificial** language. Remember, at this Gospel reading is set close to the Passover Temple sacrifice. Hadn't John the Baptist had already declared that Jesus was *'The Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin'* [John 1: 29]? During the Old Testament Temple sacrifices the lambs were killed and became burnt offerings to pay for (atone) for sins. However, certain forms of offerings involved eating a part of the sacrifice (e.g. see Leviticus 7.) Again at Passover, the roasted lamb was consumed by each family. Jesus' once and for all sacrificial death upon the cross thus superseded the Old Testament Temple sacrifices and made possible a New Testament [or Covenant] of redemption, salvation and obtaining eternal life through faith in Him.
3. In the **Eucharist**, we experience Jesus' **'real presence'** and also metaphorically reenact the Passover meal ...but as performed by Jesus, transforming its Old Testament meaning (of eating bread, flesh and wine to remember the Exodus deliverance) into a new meaning of becoming metaphorically **Jesus' own Body and Blood** that was offered for the remission of the sins of all the world.
4. In this week's Gospel, metaphorical eating and drinking are made an essential prerequisite to obtaining **Eternal Life**. Note that Jesus says that **you can have eternal life now** if you eat and drink. Further, **you will also still have eternal life** at the Last Day [i.e. upon Jesus' return in triumph when He comes again for the second time]. John explains us possessing 'Eternal life' as us coming into and remaining in a personal relationship with Jesus. *"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life"* (1 John 5:11+12)
5. **How can you know that you have eternal life?** First of all, confess your sin before our Holy God. Then accept God's provision of a Saviour on your behalf. *"Everyone*



who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”(Romans 10:13) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for your sins, and He rose again. Believe this good news; trust the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9+10)



6. Thus, you can now experience Eternal life **if you are in relationship with Jesus** as “Whoever believes in the Son **has eternal life.**” (John 3:36.)
7. Verses 56 also promises that ‘Everyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **is in me and I in them**’. The promise to those who so eat and drink is that they **abide** in Jesus and Jesus in them. This concept of “*abiding*” or “*dwelling*” (Greek : *meno*) is important in John’s Gospel. Jesus promises the disciples that the Spirit of truth will abide with them and will be in them (John 14:17). He invites the disciples to ‘*Remain in me and I in you*’; likening such abiding to the relationship between *vine and branches* (John 15:4-7). Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples, “*that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me*” (17:21).

So what does this all mean for us today? Jesus’ metaphors of Bread and eating His Flesh and Blood challenge us today **to reflect upon our own relationship with Him.** Jesus invites us to share our lives with Him, to be an intimate part of His life and He, likewise, wants to be a part of ours. Just as when we first fall in love, we just want to be with our beloved all the time [‘abiding with them’] and when we make our plans, we no longer just think of ourselves but rather what they would want to do. It’s like a marriage, you are no longer two people but one - joined together. Jesus invites us to likewise be ‘*in Him*’ and therefore also in God the Father and the Holy Spirit. *What an invitation to ‘comm- union’!* It is possible to possess knowledge about Jesus yet not be in relationship with Him. *Why not refresh and further invest that relationship today?* **Gospel reading: John 6: 51- 58** **Some resources to dig deeper:** <https://sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary-old/john-651-58/> ; <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-eternal-life.html>

Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service : Wednesday 10:30 a.m ; Every Sunday **Guitars and Ukulele** lessons at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am; **Next Sunday Messy Church @ 9am.** NB Kiwi Church is in recess

Next Sunday’s Messy Church Theme : Jesus as the Bread of Life John 6: 35

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.