

Well, to begin, how about we start at the end—John 6:67. Jesus, in one of his more human moments, in moments of vulnerability, looks at the 12 and says, *"You do not want to leave too, do you?"* To which Simon Peter answered, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."* Now, Simon Peter, more than any of the other 12 disciples, is one who often put his foot in his mouth. He's the bombastic leap and ask questions later character.

He's the figure that would rush headlong into so many circumstances regardless of his own uncertainties, and that led him, in a lot of ways, to things that were counter to the way of Jesus. But this time he nailed it. *"To whom shall we go?"* A beautiful confession, one I've been trying to pray authentically all this week. What I love about this phrase and why I want to start here is that he says, *"You have the words of eternal life."*

We come to this moment, and it's a tense one. Jesus had just fed the 5,000. There are thousands of people there. He delivers this harsh teaching, which Peter identifies as the words of eternal life, and many walk away. In this moment, you would think the message of the eternal life is what all of us are searching for, so certainly even more thousands should come and enter in.

Yet Jesus looked to the 12, *"You're not going to leave also, are you?"* Peter says, *"You have the words of eternal life."* This idea of eternal life is at the core of what it means to be human. This can sound like churchy language. It may not be what you call it. Others may call it the good life, or the destiny that you're after.

Whatever secular language we want to use, it's speaking most of the time to this same ache within us, that we desire something that the scriptures call eternal life—communion with God. But often, when we hear eternal life, in our modern analytical minds, we think immediately of the quantity of life, meaning unending, never-ceasing, the rest of the age to infinity and beyond, which isn't wrong. Certainly, the scriptures mean that when it says eternal life, but I'd make the argument that the New Testament, when it uses this phrase eternal life, puts the quantity of life as one side of the coin, and on the other side, it's speaking to the quality of life.

The word "eternal" in the Greek, *aionios*, does mean eternal and everlasting. That's accurate, but it also means "age." So when the New Testament and Paul talk about the age to come, what Jesus says is the kingdom of God, eternal life is also about that reality. It's not just unending life. It is that, but roll the coin over, and you'll see it's also about the heaven life you can experience now.

Dallas Willard described eternal life this way. *"It is not just unending life in heaven; it is an interactive relationship with God and Jesus now and forever."*

Jesus, who is a much better definer of words, said, *"Now this is eternal life."* So whatever follows is Jesus' understanding of eternal life. *"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (John 17:3). It's not just the quantity of life, but it's also the quality of life. The eternal life is to live in an interactive knowledge and relationship with God, both now and forever.

Who wouldn't want that? Well, apparently quite a few people, at least in John 6. That's what we said. That's the tension. So my question to us this morning that I want to unpack is what happens when the one who communicates the very words of eternal life contradicts or even offends us? What do we do? Because we all ache for that communion with God, whether we use that language or not, whether we're aware of it or not. We all long for some transcendence, your soul being brought back into its proper home in God, in Christ. Yet when Jesus proclaimed that here in John 6, many left and walked away.

What do we do when the words of eternal life are also the words that we find difficult to accept? Because if all of us have that in our own consciousness and souls, there are often times in which my vision of the "eternal life or good life" contradicts what Jesus teaches, and in that disparity, we're caught in a tension of how do we do it? This text presents us with the opportunity to decide if you will go the way of the crowd and turn and leave Jesus, or confess like Peter, *"To whom shall we go? You hold the words of eternal life."* Let's start at verse 60.

"On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?'" (John 6:60). Now, the disciples named here are more than just the 12. Jesus will address the 12 later, so when it says, *"Many of his disciples,"* that's speaking of the crowd, those who had been pulled in by Jesus' teachings, attracted to this message of the Kingdom of God that Jesus was on about. Many of them said, *"Jesus, this is a really hard teaching."*

The word "hard" in the Greek is the word *skleros*. It is explicitly talking about hard to swallow, hard to accept, which the NIV does a really good job of translating. It alludes to it by saying, *"Who can accept it?"* It isn't so much that this is a difficult teaching to comprehend, but a difficult one to live from, a difficult teaching to accept into the core of your being. They heard this teaching of Jesus, and said, *"Who can accept it?"* Let's review what the "it" was. Who can accept it, the hard teaching? This goes to John 6:53.

Jesus said to them, "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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them 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 them. 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. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”
John 6:53-58

I have many questions when I read a text like that. Chief among them is where is Jesus' market strategist? There are thousands here to hear this message. I'm thinking that this is the time when you accelerate the gospel. Jesus is like, "Hey, you have to eat my flesh and blood before you can experience life."

I imagine the 12 are like, "Jesus, isn't there a metaphor you could use in this moment? You know this sounds like cannibalism. What's going on?" It not only sounds like it to our ears, but years later, Rome would accuse the early Christians of being cannibals because they lived by this teaching of eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking the blood of Jesus.

There's this radical, uncomfortable moment in which this is the time to name it as clearly as possible, but Jesus goes to this teaching. Why? Well, as we unpack it, we'll find that this is quite literally the gospel right there. But certainly, it's a gospel that will offend because often that is, in fact, what happens.

It confronts us. It challenges our preconceived notions. It challenges our own sensibilities. It hits us in a way that it has a different vision of what the kingdom of God is. Every single one of us has a view of the eternal life, of what it looks like, of how it would intersect in our lives, and yet Jesus confronts those with the truth that are, in ways, radically different. So, back down to verse 60.

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. vv. 60-63

Does this offend you? It's a good question. Honestly, as we look at it, yes, cannibalism does offend me, Jesus. This is prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, in which we, when our eyes are clearly open to the table of communion, can understand better. This will ring in their hearts when they are at that final Passover, but that is after this moment in the text.

Certainly, it's offensive to them at that moment. Fold in the ancient Israelite teaching around purity laws and the idea that if you came into contact with blood, that made you "ceremonially unclean," and therefore you had to go through this whole process to clean yourself up before you could enter into the presence of God. So they would be offended.

More so, Jesus is linking in with this larger story of Exodus, the talk about the manna. That's this other piece in which God was sustaining the people of Israel after they escaped from Egypt by giving them bread from heaven. It became this metaphor in which Jesus is saying, "That

bread that sustained your ancestors, I am that bread that descended from heaven." Which is why he asked if this offended them.

We can map that particular question on a lot of different things, because you can't go far in following Jesus until the teachings of Jesus offend you. You have a vision of the good eternal life, and Jesus will inherently challenge that. I promise you, your vision, my vision, is not perfectly in alignment with Jesus.

Let me give you a metaphor on what we would do in that context. I've been married for 17 years. A little-known Kevin fact is that over those 17 years, I became the baker of the family, which was not on 20-year-old Kevin's mind at the time I got married. It happened when my oldest daughter turned nine, and we bought her this beautiful Star Wars cake, and it was excellent. Then I got the bill, and I said, "I'm going to learn how to bake." So I became the baker.

Every birthday, I'm the one who makes the cakes. Something I never expected was coming. One thing I learned is to put coffee in a chocolate cake to make it sing. I put a cup of coffee instead of water into the cake because coffee actually intensifies the cocoa flavor. It does not mask it, nor do you even taste the coffee. Rather, the hot coffee helps dissolve and bloom the cocoa powder so that all of its aromatic compounds get released into the cake. Coffee shares much of the same flavor profile as raw cacao, and so instead of competing with the chocolate, it deepens and enriches the flavor. Its bitterness helps to balance out the sugar we put in cake. It creates this beautifully rich, deep chocolate flavor.

The first time my nine-year-old saw me do this, she was tasting all the ingredients. She tasted the sugar. That's great. She loved the brown sugar. The batter was good. But then there was that fateful moment where she saw me take a cup of coffee, which in a nine-year-old's mind is disgusting, and pour it into the cake. She just says, "What are you doing? That is disgusting." Because for her, coffee was this bitter drink that she didn't understand at that point. She's a coffee addict now, but back then, she was like, "Why would you ever put that in and ruin my cake?" To which I just had to respond to her, "Listen, Maddie, you have to trust me." Because cake was never meant to be enjoyed one ingredient at a time, but rather collectively. The ingredients only make sense when you trust the chef enough to let them place each ingredient inside the whole.

It will not be long before you have that experience with Jesus. You can love his teachings on the poor and the marginalized, but not like his teachings on the rich. You can love his teachings on all the nations being welcomed in but feel he is too exclusive about the way to God only being through Jesus. Or maybe not love his teachings on hospitality, love of all, even our enemies. It can be a bridge too far.

When you are confronted with a teaching that challenges your understanding of what the good life is, you are faced with the same choice as those in John 6. Do you turn away and say, "That looks like a bitter cup of coffee," Or can you trust the teacher behind the teaching to say, what if all those ingredients together somehow actually make more sense? You may not understand it like little Maddie not understanding a black cup of coffee inside a cake recipe. She enjoyed that cake, let me tell

you. We have to come to see that when Jesus says, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood," it may not make sense, but that could be our vantage point, not the teaching itself. It could be our perspective, not an issue with the cake.

The question of whether this offends you should come to every single one of us. It will confront us. It will challenge us on what we understand it to mean to follow Jesus. That's the point, because if we don't allow the teachings of Jesus to challenge and reshape us, what we're worshiping is a projection of ourselves that we happen to call Jesus. If Jesus, every single time, agrees with you, I would invite you to more humbly read the scriptures. Not because you're always wrong, but with the humility we have to at least beg the question.

Thousands of people are there before Jesus, and when he delivers a hard teaching, many walk away. Are you going to leave me too? Lord, to whom shall we go? You, and you alone, hold the words of eternal life. Now, what we know of Peter is that he didn't have it all figured out in that moment. Don't forget, this is before his three denials on the very night that Jesus needed him most. He would still be a failure. He wouldn't put all the pieces together. He would never have it all sorted out, and yet he could confess with full honesty, where else would we go? Because he, like little Maddie, had to learn to trust. Trust the teacher behind the teaching.

Look back down at verse 64. Jesus, still speaking, says, "*Yet there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.*" He went on to say, "*This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.*"

Not everyone stuck around to figure out or taste the finished product. Not many of the disciples could stay in connection unless the Father enabled them. It's the connection with the Spirit and all of that; the flesh is worthless, but the Spirit is life. It's the invitation to say, if we are going to trust the chef, the teacher behind the teaching, we must connect ourselves to something beyond that, and that is the gift of the Spirit that guides and ministers to our hearts.

You will be confused, I promise. God did not give us a Jesus that we can fully comprehend, but he gave us a Jesus that we can perfectly trust, and that is the difference. Maddie could not comprehend coffee in the cake, but she had grown to trust that Dad likes cake, too, and maybe he's onto something. It's the only way forward. "You don't want to leave, too, do you? Such a beautiful, heartbreaking question of Jesus.

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) vv. 68-71

How did Peter come to the place of trust? What made his experience and the Twelve different from that of the crowd? How could they trust

the chef or the teacher beyond the teaching? Well, it's found in verse 69. It's the second half of the response that we gloss over too often. Yes, the first in verse 68, when he says, "*We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.*" It pushes beyond just trying to comprehend the understanding, and it moves into the realm of relationship.

The two words that Peter uses here, he says, "We have come to believe and to know." First, to believe, that's the Greek word *pisteuo*, that's where we get our word faith. It's the same thing, but a better translation. It is the idea of faithfulness, or a shorthand for that is the idea of trust. We talk a lot about faith as being trust because, honestly, in our world, when we think of faith, we think of our belief, we think of a mental assent. We think of understanding a particular doctrine or confirming a certain set of statements, which isn't bad nor wrong, but that's not what the scriptures talk about as faith. Faith is much more than this idea of placing your trust in something, which is different, because that's an active thing. It's Maddie saying, "Dad, I don't know," but she didn't cancel the birthday party. She kept going forward and said, "I'll try it later when the cake's baked." That's trust or faith.

The second is, we have come to know. That Greek word is the word *ginosko*, and it means to know mentally, but it's more than that. It means to know experientially. It's an experience of the other person. At some capacity, you may know my wife, Lindsay, but 17 years of marriage gives me a different knowing, an experiential type of knowledge. That's *ginosko*. We have come to put our trust in you because we've walked with you, we've experienced you.

That would be my bad loose-hand translation of what Peter says there. It is more than just head knowledge, an assent, an understanding of doctrine that he has pushed beyond that because God has not given us a Jesus that we can fully comprehend, but we can, in fact, trust, and over time, that trust builds and builds.

Maddie doesn't question when I put coffee in the cake now. She's watched it. She's experienced it. She's tasted and seen that the chef is good, if you will. I'd summarize it in this way. Why Peter can trust is this: we must trust the person behind the teaching. When you are confronted with a teaching of Jesus that you don't understand, and quite literally it's bitter to your mouth, or it makes you think, "I can't quite get there," you're given the choice. Many left, but Jesus would invite you further in. Could you trust that maybe there's something more here that you may not understand?

When you are confronted with a challenge to your view of "eternal life," I would invite you to lean in. Stay connected to the teacher. Part of this challenge for us is that everything in our world is set up for our own comfort and certainty. In the modern world, we know nothing of the disciplines of being uncomfortable and having uncertainty.

We want lock-tight answers to all of life's questions. We assume we can just figure it out if we have enough time, give us the right book, give us the right study, give us the right teaching, or whatever it is, then we'll have everything sorted out. Then we'll follow Jesus. But then Jesus bursts onto the scene, and says, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you'll never experience life." It confronts you and challenges you.

I'm not down on the quest for knowledge, which is of paramount importance for us in this age. But it means you'll never have it all solved. You'll never have it all figured out. We must grow comfortable with that which is uncomfortable. We must grow certain that in our uncertainty, Jesus is good. We do not often have those disciplines, but is that not the way of maturity in every arena of life?

Think about it, if you wanted to learn piano, you would sit down, and it would be very uncomfortable as you start pecking away at the scales that you do not yet know. The goal at that moment is when that offends you, and the sound hits your ears in such a way that it just doesn't ring in your soul, don't walk away and leave. Stay connected. Continue to work away. Hammer away at the scales, and over time, being uncomfortable begins to make sense in the whole. It's the way of growth in any avenue of life. It is a paradox of what it means to be human that growth comes through discomfort.

The same is true with Jesus. You will not have the answer to every question you have. There will be teachings of Jesus that will confront and challenge you. But over the years of staying connected to the teacher, you will come to the place like Peter, and say, "To whom should we go? Lord, you have shown that you have the words of eternal life. You are who you say you are. I've come to know it and to believe it." That's the invitation for us.

Often in our world, when we are confronted with that, and we become disillusioned, we run to a different community or a different connection because you can find anyone to agree with you in this day and age. Once you are confronted with that, there are many people waiting who will agree with you, but the problem with that is that at some point, when you run to that particular thing or whatever source of eternal life, I promise you there'll be another time when it contradicts with what you think.

Please see the foolishness of that. You are not following a God; you're following yourself as God. That's all it is. It is a projection. There's no silver bullet to this. This is why we have the great tradition that we have in the Christian faith. Over 2000 years of followers of Jesus trying to work these things out. We have resources within our 2,000 years to compare to if we don't quite know it's correct.

We might think something seems different than what the church has always done, and so you take a look at the scriptures to see how the witness of believers for 2,000 years has understood the teachings of Jesus. They've worked these things out. Please don't be arrogant enough, as I so often am, to assume I've figured it out, and the 2,000 years of history, well, it's a good thing they got me around now to solve it for them. We have a rich tradition that can help us navigate the things we're uncertain of.

But all of that is in submission to Jesus, who would invite us to lay our lives down as the Lord of all. And he invites us into that. What we need is not pat answers or everything solved. We need a grace-filled community that will lovingly walk together as we stay connected to the teacher behind the teaching, an audience of taste testers who trust the chef as

he brews up another pot of coffee for the cake. Could it be that we collectively navigate this together?

It all begs one more question. How can we come to trust that? What does the shape of a life look like that learns to continually walk this rhythm of saying, "Lord, here's what I'm offering to you. I don't know what to do with this, but could you figure out the right way for me to understand it? Could you work on me and break away the parts that don't make sense?"

Well, that answer is right in the hard teaching itself. So let's look back at John 6. I want to highlight three verses: verse 35 and then verses 53 through 54. *"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'"*

Jesus said to them, "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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. vv. 53-54"

The answer to how we take the shape of this life is that we come to take into ourselves the very life of Jesus. "I am the bread of life, the very sustenance in which you live on." Just like the manna in the Old Testament sustained the people of God, so too the very person of Jesus, taken into the core of our being, sustains us. The night before Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and crucified, when he sat at a table with those 12 disciples, and he took the bread, and said, "This is my body broken for you. Take and eat. This is my blood, which is poured out for you. Take and drink." I wonder if those people were like, "Wait a minute. I've heard this before. I remember way back when. Do you remember when he fed the 5,000, and they were all there? This is the same invitation as it was then, to eat his flesh and drink his blood."

Maybe at that point, the coffee taste disappeared from their mouths, and the sweetness of the cake rose to the surface, in which they came to understand that he gave his life for us. That's the sweetness of the gospel. The way we stay connected to the teacher is by coming to the table over and over and allowing the very gospel of Jesus' broken body and his poured-out blood to flow back into our lives and sustain us.

Now, I want to point this out in a more practical way because this can be in 30,000-foot mode, but there's a lot in the act of the Eucharist, which is often what our Catholic friends call it. Eucharist just means blessing. It's a good word for it. It's communion or the Lord's table. Regardless of what we call it, there's something beautiful in this act because there's been a tradition that's developed out of this. It's rooted in Matthew's account of the Last Supper.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:26-28"

This story comes out of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as in Corinthians, which are the words we often read. Also, it's hidden earlier in John 6, which is really beautiful. But there is a tradition that's arisen in which there are four words that give shape to the Eucharist, like liturgy or time together, if you will. It's the words take, bless, break, and give. Look for it in Matthew 26.

What's interesting in John 6, when that little boy brings his loaves and fish to try to feed the 5,000, this same liturgy is right there in the text. Jesus takes the bread from the boy, gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to the people. It's an allusion to what is coming later. It's John saying, "Pay attention. This will be important later on." But what's beautiful from this is these four words, take, bless, break, and give, gives us a practical pathway where we come to the table over and over again to allow this act of communion to shape us. Let's look at each one in turn.

Take

All four of these are from the perspective of Jesus. Jesus is the one taking, but implicit in his taking is our offering. Just like that little boy brought the fish and the loaves to Jesus and he took them up, so too, we bring to God whatever it is that we are offering to God.

He will take whatever we bring, however meager we may think it is. Remember in Luke 21, the widow's mite. She brought this tiny coin. It's all she had, and Jesus is elated with that gift. He will always ask us to bring our whole selves, because that's ultimately for our good and for our healing, but he will take whatever you bring. Jesus never descends into coercion. He will always receive whatever you're able to give. So we bring our offering, whatever that may look like.

Psalm 51 comes to mind. *"My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, God, you will not despise."* The offering we bring to God is nothing less than the bits of ourselves that we can muster to bring to God. It's our sins, virtues, failures, and our successes. It's everything we are. Even when we believe it isn't much, we bring it to Jesus. We offer ourselves to him, and Jesus takes that. He refuses nothing of who we are or what we've done. He will welcome us at the table.

One of the key things we have to understand is that we begin where we are, not where we think we should be, because none of us is as we should be. So we bring to God our sin, pain, ordinary humanity, struggling jobs, and our broken relationships. We offer it to God, ready to release it into his transformative hands. But God always receives that. He takes it in, and he reveals who he is as that good Father or that good chef. We release our preconceived ideas of what we must bring or what we think God must have, and we simply bring our broken selves to God. That's the first movement. It's the one that we're most involved in. It's that we bring that, and Jesus takes it.

Bless

Some translations say give thanks, which is the right translation for it. As I mentioned, the word Eucharist is the idea of thankfulness, gratitude, or grace. It's what we offer to Jesus, Jesus takes from us, and offers it to, in thanksgiving, to God himself. He doesn't examine it for flaws. He doesn't evaluate it or appraise it. He doesn't criticize or reject the

offerings. Just like Jesus with that little boy, he just takes the bread and fish, and he says, "I can work with this."

We couldn't imagine a Jesus who says, "Really, son? That's all you could bring?" Because we, at our core, know that God is a God who blesses the beauty inherent to who we are as a child of God. Henri Nouwen, in his beautiful book, *The Life of the Beloved*, says it like this.

To give a blessing is to affirm, to say 'yes' to a person's Belovedness. And more than that: To give a blessing creates the reality of which it speaks. There is a lot of mutual admiration in this world, just as there is a lot of mutual condemnation. A blessing goes beyond the distinction between admiration or condemnation, between virtues or vices, between good deeds or evil deeds. A blessing touches the original goodness of the other and calls for his or her Belovedness. Nouwen

Whatever meager thing you can bring to God, Jesus takes that in, and calls you son or daughter, beloved by the God of the universe. Church, you do not have to clean yourself up to come here. Right at the end of our text in verse 71, Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot, one of them he called the devil, was in the 12, and yet when the bread came to Judas on the night of his betrayal, he extended it freely to him. You do not have to clean yourself up to come to these tables. They are open for you. All it takes is a heart that says, "Jesus, I give you this." He takes it, and he blesses it.

Breaks

Our gifts and offerings, whether it's ourselves, sins, or failures, whatever it is that we bring, they do not remain the same. Jesus graciously sees beyond the facade and veneers that we construct to hide behind, and often what we bring are, in fact, those things. "God, I've been hiding behind this habit, this pattern. I've been trying to find life there, and I'm filled with shame over it. I'm hiding it away." Jesus sees beyond those things and recognizes that life is on the other side of it.

So when we bring whatever offering it is, Jesus says, "I can take that. I will bless you for bringing it but then allow me to graciously break this brokenness." He takes it in, just like he breaks the bread, and he says, "I will transform this for your good." It's Jesus who saves, who needs access to what is within us, to expose our insides, our inadequacies, and our "cover-ups." Often, when we're in life, we project these facades and veneers as a way to protect ourselves. Sometimes those are good, healthy, and needed. They're things as young, vulnerable children, we project to the world to hide from the pain. But over time, that veneer becomes the very barrier to receiving the love of God if not dealt with.

So those things that we bring before God, we're saying, "God, could you break this so that I can experience your genuine love at the core of who I am?" Don't miss the metaphor of the break. It's hard. It's not easy. That's why many walked away. They couldn't quite take that. But the invitation is to offer it up and say, "Jesus, could you take this? Could you bless it? And then could you break it?" The breaking's not abstract. Jesus says, "This is my body broken for you." It will be painful for us, but never forget the prophet's words in Isaiah 53,

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:4-6

Jesus takes our brokenness on himself, and then he allows himself to be broken. Your brokenness, your wounds, your sinfulness, all of that was taken by Jesus on the cross, and he says, "I will endure that brokenness so that you can have life." That's where this whole thing goes to the fourth movement—take, bless, break, give. T

Give

The final movement of the Eucharist, is that Jesus takes, but then offers his very life to us. It's always been aimed towards this exchange. You come to the table, "Lord, this is all I have." "Yes, my son or daughter, I love you. You are blessed. Let's break this and commune together." He invites you into that new life.

Paul says this in Colossians 1:27, *"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* Or Paul later in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

All of this is us saying, "Jesus, could you take my life? Could you break away the parts that prevent me from experiencing that communion with you?" And then Jesus does the unthinkable. He gives his life to us, and we are welcomed into union with God. This is eternal life, that you may know God. That's the invitation that's always been there. Take, bless, break, give. Christ in us and Christ through us. That's the invitation of the table.

I wonder if you might pause for just a second and hear those words of Jesus. "Are you going to leave, too?" And then I'd invite you just to think if you want to proceed like Peter and say, "I do believe, Lord, you have the words of eternal life."

What is it that Jesus is inviting you to bring to the table that he can take? Is it a habit? Is it a sin? Is it a success that you've been living on? Is it a brokenness in a relationship that's just tearing you apart? What is it that you need to bring to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I need your salvation in this. I can't do it on my own." May you allow Jesus to take it, bless it, break it, and give you new life. That's the invitation.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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