

John 6 is not about the Lord's Supper, though it is very helpful in our understanding what the Supper is chiefly about. This chapter, from beginning to end, is about the mystical union that believers have with Christ – that we have through faith in Christ, through a faith we maintain by feeding on Christ – and that vital union we must have with Him if we are to know Him and embrace the hope of glory.

This mystical union is portrayed in Scripture under several different analogies, including the vine and the branches (John 15), the head and the body (Eph. 5), and, as a development of that, the relationship of husband and wife in marriage. The mystical union of Christ and His people is illustrated in the passage before us by the act of eating and drinking; eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood is a picture of our appropriating Him by faith, of our taking Him into the soul, of our being nourished by Him, so that we may grow in faith from strength to strength.

As we get older, the right eating habits should be cultivated and diligently regulated. The difference, though, is that, while our bodies do better with less food over time, our souls do better with more food. No one can take in too much of Jesus Christ. Let us work at it, therefore, learning to consume more of Him than ever we have before!

Let us be very specific now. What are the ordinary means by which the Christian may eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood? – which is to say, what are the main ways he has of nourishing his faith? In terms of the public means of grace, there are 3 which stand out and are emphasized in the Bible. What are they?

1. There is the ministry of the Word. There is dire need for faithful preaching, but there is also the same need for faithful and very careful hearing. Here are a few things to help us in doing that: (a) Go to a church where the whole counsel of God is faithfully proclaimed. If you have not found such a church yet, keep looking. Feeding on Christ is too important to waste your time on junk food. (b) Attend that church regularly and participate fully, both for your own sake and for the encouragement you might be to others. (c) Put maximum effort into hearing every sermon. Make a habit of meditating on the Word of God. Just as a cow will chew the cud, so we, too, need to spend time 'chewing' on what we have heard, and to continue doing that, in order to digest it most profitably. (d) Apply the Word with all diligence. Work it out in your life. Be a doer of the Word, and not a hearer only!

2. There is the ministry of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The message of each of these is not different from the preaching, but these signs and seals are meant to confirm the preaching. May this celebration of the Supper be such a blessing to us today!

3. There is the ministry of prayer. Prayer is the other side of the conversation, our letting our requests be made known unto God. Our loving heavenly Father has given us every encouragement to pray (Matt. 7:11), so how careless it would be if we neglected to do that!