

JOHN 6:51-58 August 15, 2018

As a child in Sunday School I sang the song “Into My Heart.” Part of it goes like this:

Into my heart, into my heart.

Come into my heart, Lord Jesus

Come in today, come in to stay

Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Our passage this week promises that Jesus will abide in those who “eat his flesh and drink his blood” So inviting him in is an excellent first step. It’s a good lesson for children to sing and remember.

But this passage is a confusing text. The early Christians were accused of being cannibals with eating flesh and drinking blood. It isn’t to the Last Supper that Jesus gives us the bread and wine directive.

The Bible uses the word abide as a verb 40 times in John. It means to remain, stay, live, dwell, last, endure, continue. The Bible also uses the word abide as a noun 120 times as a dwelling place, room or home. John’s Gospel emphasizes that we are to invite Jesus to live in or abide in us.

And who is this Jesus we are inviting into our hearts? He is one in whom God dwells. Jesus words from John 14:10. “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works”.

Again Jesus speaks in John 15:9-10. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

How are we to respond to this Jesus who lives in God and in whom God lives? We are to invite him "into our hearts," to live in us. Again Jesus speaks in John 14:23, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

Jesus says in John 6:56, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them"

The most intimate act I can think of is eating. Now whatever we are eating actually become part of us-into the very cells of our body. There is no other meal that we eat that forgives sin. Go to Mickey's and get a hamburger. No forgiveness of our sin. Dine at the fanciest restaurant you can think of and there also is no forgiveness in that meal. But a simple meal of bread and wine contains the very forgiveness we need and want. This meal allows us to abide in Jesus and He in us.

Allowing Jesus to abide in us, recognizing his divine identity and inviting him into our hearts is what we are to do as our part of the relationship. But then John goes on to highlight the bigger picture-that is, as Jesus abides in God, so we already abide in Jesus. We live in Jesus' heart and in Jesus' house. Jesus speaks in John 14:2 "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" We are used to thinking about Jesus living in us and inviting him into our hearts. We are not so accustomed to meditating on the reality that we already live in Jesus' heart. Jesus

knows us. We are not here on earth as an accident. Even the hairs of our head are counted. There has never been, nor will ever be someone exactly like you and I. Jesus knows us.

The recognition that we live in Jesus is both comforting and challenging. It's comforting because it means we don't have to do everything. When our personal lives are chaotic or disappointing, when our society is so polarized and violent, we remember that we live and move and have our being in Jesus. That is our context. It is a context of judgment but also of hope. It is a context in which we are expected to invite Jesus into our hearts and, as a result, to persevere or remain or abide in following his teachings and believing in his unique identity.

We are expected, as branches of the vine to bear fruit. Jesus speaks in John 15:5&7 "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you"

There is a promise along with the expectation. We are promised that we are no longer people who walk in darkness but people have come into the light....the light of Jesus. Amen