

802524 "**Lord, to Whom Can We Go?**" John 6:56-69

Today, we look at a passage from the Gospel of John that confronts us with one of the most challenging moments in Jesus' ministry. This passage is one that calls us to reflect on our own faith and commitment to Christ. John 6:56–69 captures a key moment when many of Jesus' disciples turned away from him because they could not accept his teachings. The disciples mentioned here are disciples in a broad sense. The Bible records that at the time of Jesus, there were 12 disciples chosen by Jesus, and that there were many other disciples who followed him. We end up asking these questions: What does it mean to truly follow Jesus, even when it is difficult to understand or accept his words?

To understand why so many disciples turned away, we must first consider the context of Jesus' teachings. In the earlier parts of John 6, Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the multitudes with just five loaves and two fish. The people were amazed, and many followed Him, hoping for more miraculous signs and perhaps even physical sustenance.

In John 6:15, we see that the people who experienced the miracle of the five loaves and two fish wanted to make Jesus their king. The people wanted a king who would free them from the needs of their flesh and from Roman oppression. And yet, they were looking for another sign, following Jesus all the way up to the Northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. In fact, the Sea of Galilee is a lake, but it is so large that it is often called a sea. After the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, the people had to travel a considerable distance to meet Jesus again.

Yet, Jesus wasn't impressed or seduced by a crowd that wanted to make him king. When Jesus began his public ministry, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil three times, one of the

temptations was that if Jesus would bow down to the devil, he would give him all authority in the world, but Jesus defeated the devil with the word: Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' To Jesus, the prospect of an earthly kingdom was nothing more than a devil's temptation, and Jesus resolutely rejected it.

But Jesus used this opportunity to teach a deeper truth. He declared himself to be the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35). He explained that just as bread sustains physical life, He himself is the spiritual nourishment that sustains eternal life. He went further, saying in verse 56, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them." These words were difficult for many to accept, and they were not meant to be taken literally but symbolically, pointing to the deep, spiritual union between Christ and his followers.

As we see in verse 60, the disciples responded, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" Jesus was not merely asking them to believe in him as a miracle worker or teacher. He was calling them to a deeper level of commitment, one that required total surrender and trust in him as the source of eternal life. You see the difference. People wanted things of the flesh, and Jesus was talking about spiritual things and eternal life.

This teaching was offensive to many for several reasons. First, if taken literally, the idea of eating flesh and drinking blood was shocking and even repulsive to people. Second, the call to depend completely on Jesus for spiritual life was fundamentally different from the religious understanding of the time. The disciples were faced with the reality that following Jesus meant accepting teachings that were difficult to understand and contrary to their expectations. There is a clear difference between the crowd and the disciples.

Jesus offered them and offers us heavenly bread for eternal life, but we

must eat it. Faith in Jesus is not compared with tasting or admiring, but with eating, taking him in. Jesus says that we must have him within us, and we must partake of him. The sacrificial life of Jesus is food and drink for the hungry and thirsty soul. When we accept and internalize Jesus Christ and his crucifixion for us, we truly abide in Jesus and he abides in us.

In verse 66 we see the result. "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." These were not casual followers but disciples who had walked with Jesus, witnessed his miracles, and heard his teachings. However, when confronted with a teaching that challenged their understanding and comfort, they chose to walk away.

This moment invites us to reflect on our own journey of faith. How do we respond when God's Word challenges us or when we are faced with something we find difficult to accept? Do we, like those disciples, turn away when the cost of following Jesus becomes too high, or do we press on in faith, trusting that his words are true even when we do not fully understand them?

After many had left, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (John 6:67). Jesus understood the offense many of his listeners took at his teaching, yet he did not change the teaching or feel it was his fault. Jesus didn't preach just to please his audience. If that was his concern, or if Jesus' concern was to increase followers or subscribers as it is today, he would have instantly taken back what was just said, seeing his audience was offended. Jesus didn't take it back. He challenged and confronted them even more.

Peter, often the spokesman for the Twelve, answered with words that should resonate in our hearts: "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" (John 6:68-69). Peter recognized Jesus as Lord. He recognized Jesus as the preferred alternative, despite the difficulties. He recognized the value of spiritual things, more than the material and earthly desires of those who walked away. He recognized Jesus as Messiah (the Christ) and God (Son of the living God).

Peter's response is a powerful declaration of faith. The passage we've examined today highlights the challenge of true discipleship. Following Jesus is not always easy. His teachings may confront us, challenge our assumptions, and demand that we surrender our own will and understanding.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, let us be reminded that true discipleship is not measured by our understanding or comfort, but by our willingness to follow Jesus wherever He leads. Like Peter, let us declare, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Even when life's path is difficult, may we hold fast to this truth and trust that Jesus, the Bread of Life, will sustain us on our journey to eternity. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.