

WHAT NOW?

The 12th Sunday after Pentecost

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Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church

John 6:51-69

Grace, peace and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I. INTRODUCTION

John chapter 6 is filled with the message of spiritual and everlasting life. 10 times it is mentioned in addition the resurrection being mentioned 4 times. This is a chapter all about life and the means of grace. Jesus yearns to give all life and the resurrection of the body unto life everlasting. But, those listening to these words rejected Jesus as true God and true man. And they rejected His message.

These people had just heard a wonderful sermon out of the mouth of the Master. They had learned that faith alone is the only work that God desires. And that Jesus is the life-giver and the faith giver of all. They heard that the grace of God in Jesus is universal, and no one is refused. God has given to the Son the partakers of that grace and their faith. It is the work of God. God draws all to Christ, and those who believe are certain of everlasting life. There is a communication of attributes in the Godhead, between the divine and the human nature in Christ; there is also a mystical union between God the Father and the Son and all believers. And yet some of these disciples were offended; they found it a hard saying, that the flesh of this Man (Jesus) should give eternal life.

5,000 people, plus women and children, were fed in the wilderness (just outside Bethsaida) just one day before Jesus sermon. They were called "a large crowd," in John 6:5. On the day Jesus preached His sermon we are told in verses 24 and 59 that another "large crowd" came from Bethsaida to Capernaum. They came seeking Jesus. Very likely this crowd was not as large as it had been on the day before. Those who left Jesus after He had concluded His sermon are called the "many". Though the text doesn't say how many, it seems that Jesus' entire audience, except for the disciples, had left Him.

II. WHO CAN LISTEN TO IT?

"When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'" (John 6:60). What are they are thinking? Maybe they were thinking: "Why waste our time listening to Him." In John 10:20 we see the same attitude when the hearers' say: ***"He has a devil and is mad."*** Remember, the Gospel is foolishness to the unbeliever. I like the way the New English Bible translates this text: ***"This is more than we can stomach! Why listen to such talk?"***

By the way, "Hearing" is used in two senses in this verse. They heard Him and yet they would not hear Him. He spoke but they would not understand.

This attitude affected the disciple too. Jesus knew that His disciples were perplexed, they were grumbling about this, so Jesus said to them, ***"Do you take offense at this?"*** Notice that no one came running up to Jesus informing Him of the disciples' perplexity. "Gee Jesus, the disciples seem utterly perplexed; You better go have a talk with them!" No one needed to inform Jesus as to the disciples' reaction. All of John 6 is abounding with evidence of Jesus' divinity and humanity. He knew the desires of their hearts. Just because Jesus was in the flesh, He wasn't void of His divinity. He is still God!

Listen again to a portion of our text: (Jesus speaking) ***"What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe." "For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray Him"*** (John 6:62-64).

Jesus is disappointed in them. The disciples saw! In verse 2 they saw the large crowd following due to the many healings Jesus did! They saw! In verse 14 they saw the great sign of Jesus feeding the 5000 - plus! They saw! In verse 26 Jesus says: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves”**. They saw and heard! So Jesus says: **“What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?”** Disciples, what if you saw me ascend would it make a bit of difference in the way you look at me? Would you believe more? What about you, would it make a difference in the way you look at Jesus, if you saw a great miracle?

There are far greater things which were yet to come for them: His crucifixion, His death, His resurrection and His ascension. These are the great saving acts of Jesus that would stagger people's imagination. What Jesus is saying is this: "You need faith to accept these great truths." No law can make you alive. No law can bring you justification. People are made alive; people are justified, only through Christ and His Gospel. No one else or nothing else can do that. Jesus words are spirit and life and the flesh is of no help. **“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ”** (Romans 10:17).

III. WHO WILL LISTEN TO IT?

By now you might be thinking alright pastor, so what is the point of all this? Dear brothers and sisters in the faith, what Jesus is telling you, quite clearly, is that His words are spirit and life—that they are the saving truth—and yet not everyone is going to believe. In fact, even some Christians will finally depart from the Lord because they do not yield to His Word. They refuse and reject the very Word of God.

And why will some not believe in the Lord Jesus? Because the Gospel of Christ and His cross continue to be foolishness to those who are perishing! Quite frankly, you don't need me to tell you this from the pulpit—you already know full well that not everyone who hears the Good News of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is going to believe. Jesus mentions in our text **“But there are some of you who do not believe.”** He goes on to say He knew from the beginning who would betray Him (†).

“From the beginning” -- how far back does this phrase take us? The phrase plainly indicates Jesus' divinity and that Jesus knew before this day in Capernaum who would not believe and also that Judas was going to betray Him. We stand in awe of the love of Jesus. Though He knew that some would not believe and that Judas was going to betray Him, Jesus made every attempt to bring these people to a saving Christian faith. God does not use His foreknowledge to withhold His grace.

“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” (John 6:66-67). Our own situation becomes uncomfortable when our Lord Jesus asks us, whether you too, are going to depart from Him? Now, I don't speak these words to you in order to rattle your faith and lead you to doubt your salvation. Not at all! But as your pastor, I have the responsibility of preaching the pure Word of God to you, and in turn warning you against false teaching. And there is an abundance of false teaching in our culture and in pop American Christianity today, which nurtures the doubt that already springs forth from our own sinful hearts by nature.

Let me prove my point. Jesus has told you, from this chapter in the Gospel of John alone that He is the very bread of life that came down from heaven. Whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood, that is, whoever embraces Him in true, saving faith, which is God's gift, will live forever. On the other hand, whoever does not - has no life in Him. And not only this, but also that He alone is the source of life and being. He came to give you the living bread, not just bread to feed your stomachs. Hence, the whole purpose of Christ, the eternal Son of God, becoming man in His incarnation, was for the benefit of your souls—that by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, you would be justified—declared righteous before God and seen as holy and innocent in His sight. Not on account of your own good works, but because of Christ's full atonement for the sins of the whole world and for you, therefore you have the promise of forgiveness.

Is this what is taught in popular Christianity today? Is this the focus of Christian radio? Is this the position taken by the writers of the best sellers Christian books and magazines? Sadly, it is not! These venues don't focus upon Christ's work on behalf of sinful humanity. They instead point to Jesus as an example or to His teachings as a model for Christian living and behavior. Oh, such things can serve a good purpose—Scripture indeed declares that Christ is our example, but these things are not to be placed front and center ahead of Jesus' death and resurrection. As presented, their focus is on Law and not on the Gospel.

Let me be clear. You will not go to heaven by doing your best at keeping the 10 commandments, or because you read through the Bible every year, or because you have surrendered your life to Christ and made a decision to accept Him. Jesus said that it is He who saves you and does all the work. Yet our fallen, sinful hearts continue to respond, ***This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?*** And even when we know Jesus as The Bread of Life, we still ask with those whom He taught, ***“What must we do to be doing the works of God?”***

Your own righteous works are as filthy rags in the sight of God—they count for nothing toward your salvation. Woe to the soul who is deceived into believing that they can achieve God's favor. There is none righteous—no, not one. But don't we really want to be told we are doing a great job. Don't we want the praise and acclamation for our own good efforts? Don't we love to point to ourselves rather than to the (†) cross?

After Jesus spoke to His followers and said that not all will believe, ***some of them drew back and walked with Him no more.*** And here Jesus reacted in a way that is often ignored in our modern society - He let them go. And this shows the second point of Jesus' words. The first was that not all will believe and that not everyone will even remain in the faith, and now we see that God accepts this. The Lord knows that some will remain hardened against the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that many will even depart from Him. And now Jesus asks the disciples: ***“Will you leave also?”*** And you, “Will you leave also?”

IV. YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE!

It was “Simon Peter who answered Him, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God”*** (John 6:68-69). The conviction of faith always precedes the acknowledgment Christ Lordship. In all simplicity Peter is saying that they believe that Jesus is Lord and is truly what He says of Himself in this dialogue. They would not follow the crowd that departed, nor follow a Judas nor a devil nor any who rejected Jesus and His Word. Where else could they go? To whom else could they turn? For He alone (†) has the words of eternal life.

When we lie on our death beds someday, when our end comes in this life, when we stand before Jesus on that last day, there will be nothing that will be so important as to know and believe in Jesus and His Words of eternal life. May God the Holy Spirit teach us all, to be real disciples of Jesus, to be disciples of Jesus when it's all good, and especially to be His disciples even when it's challenging and doesn't seem easy.

Only Jesus is the bread of life. Only Jesus has the Words of eternal life. For by Him alone, by His baptism, fasting and temptation, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and Passion, by His precious death and burial the price for all your sins has been paid in full. Because of Jesus all your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” Lord we thank you for all you have done and continue to do, in Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.