

Sunday Sermon: August 26, 2018

Sermon Text: John 6:60-69

Sermon Theme: Lord to Whom Shall We Go?

⁶⁰ On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶² What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁴ 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. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

It's that time of year again. Children are back in school and homework is coming home. Across the country parents and students are having the same discussion almost every night, "Do you have any homework?" "Yeah, but I don't get it." "Did you ask the teacher for help?" "No, they don't know either."

It's important to know where to get the help we need. The student needs to know that they can and should get help from mom or dad or their teachers when they don't understand something. People need to know that the police or firemen will be there if they are in danger. You need to know that they can go to a doctor for help when they are sick.

But what about spiritual help? Where can we get spiritual help when we need it? This morning we see people who don't want the spiritual help that is right in front of them. Instead, they trusted in their own understanding and turned away from Jesus in unbelief. Even in the midst of these people who turned away, we hear the words that bring us the spiritual help and direction we need, **"Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life."**

Over the last four weeks we have heard Jesus preaching the bread of life sermon in John chapter 6. As he preached this sermon, the people challenged Jesus, "We follow Moses. We know he was handpicked by God to lead the children of Israel. He provided manna for 40 years in the wilderness. What great sign will you provide that shows that we should listen to you?"

Jesus answers their challenge during his sermon with an analogy, a comparison, between himself and the manna from heaven. Manna was a great blessing sent not by Moses, but by God from heaven. It wasn't meant to be something that just filled the people's stomach, it was meant to have them look to the Lord in faith. The manna was only temporary, it wouldn't last. That miracle came to an end when the people walked into the Promised Land.

Jesus preaches that he is the real manna, the real blessing sent by God from heaven. What he brings with him is something that will last forever and will never end. When the people ate of him, when they listened to his Word and believed in him, the gifts he brought would go much further than a full stomach, these gifts would last to eternal life.

The people's response to this sermon of Jesus is evident in their reaction. During each of our Gospels over the last 4 weeks, more and more people grumble about Jesus' message and turn away from him.

Yet, even as the people continue to walk away from him, Jesus doesn't change his message so that they will stay, he doesn't alter that message at all. He continues to preach and teach the same thing because it is the most important message that sinners need to hear, "I am your Savior, believe and trust in me."

We might think that these were all just unbelievers. Maybe Jesus' analogy was just too vague or too difficult for them to understand. There is no doubt that there would have been some, even many who were not spiritually mature enough to understand what Jesus was talking about. But there were also people who heard it and didn't want to understand it.

By the time of our sermon text, the crowds had largely dispersed, many of those who had come to see the show or who were looking for a miracle had wandered away. What was left was the group of people who considered themselves Jesus' disciples. The word disciple in Greek means *learner*. Of all the religious ideas and philosophies, they had chosen to follow Jesus and learn from him. Along with the 12, these people followed Jesus closely and

listened to him. But something happened when Jesus taught that he was the Savior. Something changed. **“On hearing this, many of the disciples said, these are hard words, who is able to hear them?”**

The reason these disciples were upset was not because they didn't understand what Jesus was preaching, it was not that it was too hard for them to understand. The reason they are upset was because they did understand what Jesus was saying. It was hard for them to stand there and listen to Jesus say these things about their religion. They grew more and more angry as Jesus called himself the Savior. Jesus' words offended them and they objected to this message. Jesus' answer to them shows this to be true. ⁶¹ **Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”**

Jesus points out the sin that has already taken over their hearts. This phrase, does this offend you, is actually translated closer to “has this caused you to stumble and lose your faith.” If we put it into our own words it would sound like this “It this it then? Is this what causes you to be done with me?”

Jesus continues to question them. **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 are spirit and they are life.** These are spiritual truths that Jesus is speaking about. They will not be understood with human reason or wisdom. They can only be understood through faith by the Holy Spirit.

It is only through faith that anyone can believe that the Son of Man was sent by God the Father to come down to earth save us. It is only through the Holy Spirit that anyone can believe that Jesus was the the Old testament Messiah just as the Old Testament said, the Lamb that would be sacrificed for the salvation of the world. The Messiah will give his body and blood to take away your sins and when he is done he will go back to heaven to the heavenly Father. Jesus was telling them, If I were not the Messiah, I should not say these things, you would have every reason to be offended and walk away, but I am the Messiah, sent from heaven and what I say is true.

These disciples didn't want to wrestle with this teaching. They didn't want to learn more about what Jesus was saying. This Messiah was not for them. They had evaluated Jesus according to their own understanding and they were ready to look somewhere else for their spiritual truth. They walked away.

This problem of evaluating God according to our way of thinking or the values and morals of society was not unique to the Jews, it is something that all people do, even Christians. Today, the long-held tenets about even the most basic of Bible beliefs of Christian denominations are no longer held onto. I don't know how many times I have heard, “We don't believe that anymore.” There are Lutheran denominations that no longer hold to the truths of the Bible that Luther fought so hard to bring to light as the truth of Scripture and the saving Gospel..

In many ways, the devil has led us right back into a Dark Age of religion where there are many things that look and feel religious, but really aren't. Studies have shown that the religious IQ of people who consider themselves religious is very low even for the most basic of Bible knowledge and doctrine. In many ways we want a religion that is custom made for us and our lifestyle, for the things that we like and don't like. We don't really want to study God's Word and what find out what he wants to believe.

And this is not just out there in the world. There are many times that we have fallen into the same thinking. When was the last time you dug into Scripture for God's answer to a Biblical question? When a question of sin and grace came up and you didn't know the answer, did you look to God first, or did you look to your own understanding of things?

All too often, when we come across a doctrine or teaching that seems too difficult, we throw our hands up and think, “I don't get it. That is for someone smarter than me.” We don't ask for help. We don't dig into Scripture. We don't look to a trusted pastor or God's Word for help. Instead, we rely on our own understanding which often leads us into doubt and unbelief.

We so easily fall into the thinking of the world around us because we do not look to the Word for guidance. We want an answer that is pleasing to us and sounds good to the world. Some of those same studies show what happens to our beliefs when we rely on our own understanding or the values and morals of society rather than God's Word.

Many people who call themselves “Christians” believe that there are many ways to heaven. Many “Christians” believe that abortion is completely acceptable to God. Many “Christians” believe that living together and having sex outside of the marriage bond is the way that God wants us to get ready for marriage. Many “Christians” believe that the LGBTQ lifestyles are just alternative ways to live and aren't sinful.

These are not the words and teachings of Scripture, these are all ways that the devil has pushed into our everyday life and has places temptation and sin at our doorstep. The devil has caused us to value our own thinking and that of our society over what the Lord says in his Word. This is what happened to these followers of Jesus. They thought that their message, their beliefs made more sense. The devil won this battle and they walked away.

Jesus turns to the 12 disciples and asks them, **“Do you want to leave, too?”**

It’s hard to believe that the disciples would have completely understood what Jesus was teaching here. There were other times that he had taught things much simpler that they didn’t understand, but here Peter and the disciples show faith in their Savior. The heart of a believer says, “Even if I don’t understand, or struggle, or wrestle what you say, **“Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life.**

A believer is not afraid to struggle and wrestle with God’s Word. We all have struggles, we all have times when we don’t understand something from God’s Word. A believer knows that these are not times to turn from the Lord, these are times when we have a place to go to look for answers. Why would we go anywhere else? There is nowhere else that we will hear the promises that our Savior has made to us in his Word. These are times when we pray to the Lord for help and guidance and then we study his Word or we ask a trusted pastor for help because the Holy Spirit can and does increase our faith and help us understand even these things.

The Holy Spirit led the disciples to say these things. And what a confession of faith it is. Our own thinking can never reveal to us the love of a Savior who loves us even though we sin and is willing to forgive us of those sins. Society will not be able to show us a Savior who sacrificed himself, giving up his life to give us eternity with him. It is only in the Bible that we hear and have the words of eternal life. John says at the end of his book, **“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.** Jesus has the words of eternal life. He wants us to hear them loudly and clearly, so that we always know where to turn when we have questions of faith. Jesus to whom shall we go, you have the words which show us where to turn and who to trust in, for our forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.