

John 6:60-71

WILL YOU STAY OR WILL YOU GO?

REVIEW/INTRO

As we looked at chapter 6 we have seen Jesus make some bold and even radical claims to those who followed Him.

Jesus made Claims like:

- what God fed them with in the wilderness was nothing compared to eating His flesh and drinking His blood!
- And what did He mean about “if we eat His flesh and drink His blood then we abide in Him, and He abides in us!?”
- They grumbled because He made the claim “I am the bread that came down from heaven!”
- That He was sent from the Father , and whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.
- Then there was all the talk of being raised up on the last day, and kept repeating all this “lifted up” nonsense.

Their response was to beg for bread and grumble when Jesus dared to present Himself as God’s Son come in the flesh and calling for a response of radical life change and of feeding deeply on Jesus.

Let’s work through the text....

60 When many of his disciples heard it,

Heard what? (Heard what He said about feeding on His flesh and blood.)

(Disciples: not just anyone).

We have come to think that Jesus only had 12 disciples. Yes, He chose those closest to Him, but over time He had many disciples. Some of them followed Him when things went well and when they thought they might get a benefit from Him. But the crowds would thin when His disciples realized that following Him means that we must leave the old life behind and get our life from Jesus.

they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

(Greek word for "Hard" here is "*skleros*," which means not hard to understand, but hard to accept.) The disciples knew that Jesus was claiming to be the very life of God come down from heaven, and that no one could live this life or face eternity without submitting to Him. Their difficulty was to accept that as true along with all its implications.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

This is why many today refuse Christ; not because it's hard to understand, but because He challenges our life.

How many times have you heard someone say: "Yeah, not ready for that Jesus stuff yet, I wanna experience life first!" They wanna continue feeding on the loaf of bread, and not the bread of Life.

It is not usually the intellectual difficulty which keeps people from becoming Christians, but Jesus' moral demands.

The real difficulty is that it demands an act of complete surrender to Christ, and acceptance of Him as the final authority, and it demands a moral standard of the highest level. **(Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me).**

This is what separates the disciples from fair weather followers. And I pray that God gives you grace today to follow hard after Jesus even when it is unpopular or requires sacrifice.

I would not trade the joy that The Holy Spirit brings into my life for any amount of popularity.

61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this,

Therefore, they “Grumbled.” (Kinda like the grumbling they did with Moses).

This spiritual amnesia — forgetting God’s deliverance and provision — is a deadly disease in all of us. And like the Israelites with Moses, the same is happening here with those who had been following Jesus, as well as all of us on occasions.

The antidote to spiritual amnesia is making every effort to recall and remember God’s gracious deliverance. The fact that we — a sinner who was an enemy of God — are now a beloved child is a miracle. Don’t let that wonder ever fade.

said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”

(How many times did He refer to being “lifted up?” 4 times: Vs. 39, 40, 44, 62)

(If the acts and teachings of Jesus thus far offended these wanna-be disciples, what will happen when He comes to the climax of His ministry - being lifted up in the death and Resurrection and “*ascending where He was before.*”)

I don’t think Jesus was trying to prove His claim here, but rather state that some day events will prove it.

Maybe **Jesus was** saying something like: “You find it hard to believe I am the bread, the essence of life, which *came down* from heaven. Well then, you won’t have any problem in accepting the claim when the day comes when you see Me *ascending back* to heaven.”

This was a prophecy of the Ascension! It means that the resurrection is the guarantee of the claims of Jesus. He was not one who lived nobly and died gallantly for a lost cause; He was the One whose claims were vindicated by the fact that He rose again!

1 Cor. 15:14 - “And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation, and so is your faith.”

But He has risen! He has proved to be Lord and Christ.
And He still offers to be the true bread and life to anyone
who feeds on Him rather than the world.

When you have moment of doubt look to the empty
tomb and the resurrection!

When you are suffering, look to the resurrection.

When you need more of God's power in your life look to
the resurrection!

**63 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. 64 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.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told
you that no one can come to me unless it is granted
him by the Father.”**

**(Again the verses I gave earlier apply here: 1 Cor.
1:18 and 1 Cor. 2:14).**

The Spirit fills His words with the very truth of God, so
they are life to those who hear and accept it.

That Spirit, which was revealed in the act of Jesus feeding the hungry crowd, is manifested just as much in the words He speaks. Both the deed and the word are given enlivening power by the Spirit.

What He is saying is: *"My words are the incarnation and communication of the Spirit; it is the Spirit who dwells in them and acts through them; and for this reason they communicate life."*

The Spirit is also at work in those who are drawn and given to Him by the Father.

But Jesus knows that among His listeners are those who have made the initial response, but they have not believed.

They saw His miracles, they were fed by Him, but when it came down to the all the talk of believing in Him and living it out, it wasn't spirit led, but emotion led and based on the attractional model.

(kinda like when we attend Districts, No Regrets, Glory Gals, or some other really awesome conference or event.

They come home and eventually forget anything they were taught and faded back into their old lives once the excitement was over).

Kind of like the parable of the sower in Matt. 13:5 “Some (seed) fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.”

They have seen and heard and started, but have not been “given by the Father.” (**‘Given by the Father’ goes back to what Pastor Mike preached on last week in verse 44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” The main statement was that: “If God is not drawing you it is impossible to come to Jesus.”**

So, because of this, there is separation. *“From that day many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (v.66).* The seeds withered up and were scorched; The entertainment and emotions died down and they lost interest and went back to their pleasure seeking.

A sorrowful parting, but it is better to have a handful who will eat His flesh and drink His blood than a crowd who will simply observe curiously from afar.

(When we are really in it for HIM and not for the SHOW, ...our lives are transformed and filled with power and joy and purpose!

Many who attend these kinds of things are those who observe from afar. They want the lights, the show, the cool speakers, the amazing people they meet, and all that goes with it. They want the bread, but they don't want the Bread of Life.

(The things of the flesh all gain their value from the spirit in which they are done!!) His words are "spirit and life". He alone can tell us what life is, put into us the spirit in which it must be lived, and give us the strength to live it.

Life takes its value from its purpose and its goal.

Christ alone can give us true purpose in life, and also the power to work out that purpose against the constant opposition that comes from without and within.

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

P.J. Temple makes the comment in "The Eucharist":
"Those who wanted a temporal king who would give them food for the body turned their backs on the King's Son when He promised a banquet truly royal for the soul."

Because of the Truth Jesus spoke, and the depth of what He said in this invitation, there is a division. The casual followers, those who have not counted the cost, find that what He has said to be too hard for them.

The TRUTH is always hard for those of us who thought He would settle for less than He demands. It's not the saying that's hard, but that our unbelieving hearts reject what He asks of us.

There was a time when men were coming to Jesus in large numbers, but now the tone of things were changing, and from here on in there was a growing hatred which would eventually culminate in the Cross.

It is situations like these that reveal our true hearts and show our true colors. These people drifted away for a few reason, as do we.

Some saw where Jesus was heading. He was challenging the authorities and they knew He was headed for trouble, so they planned on getting out in time.

They were what we call “fair weather followers!” It is said that the test of an army is how it fights when it is tired.

We tend to think of success when we think of our heroes. Winning a battle, winning an election, prospering in business, riding high in the popularity poles...

And then there are moments of testing, when the hero looks like a loser, a failure; or when the hero says things that perplex us and are contrary to all we believe.

They (and we) like to think of Jesus at the moments of great success: when He casts out a demon, or feeds the 5 thousand, or walks on water, or in His glorious resurrection.

But the truth is that Jesus wasn't interested in popularity poles or “success” as we define it. He was interested only in accomplishing His Father's will, and speaking His Father's truth.

So we must decide - are we interested in popularity and success and big crowds? Or are we interested only in following Christ?

Those who drifted stuck by Jesus only so long as his career was going well, but at the first shadow of the Cross, they fled.

Some shirked the challenge of Jesus. Up until now, as Pastor Mike has mentioned for the last 2 weeks, their point of view was that they had come to Jesus to get something from Him; but when it came to suffering FOR Him and giving TO Him, they quit.

No one can give as much as Jesus, but if we come to Him solely to get and never give, we will have to turn back. Any who follows Jesus must remember that in the following there is always the Cross.

67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"

They have seen Him welcome the crowd and feed them, they have experienced the guarantee of His eternal presence in the stormy night at sea. They Have listened to His strong demand, that only those who eat His flesh and drink His blood will live, and then have watched the easy starters leave. And they are still with Him.

So also for us when we realize the whole life commitment required when you must get your life from Jesus alone.

When you come to that point in life where the Holy Spirit works inside of you and you come to the stark realization of just who Jesus is and what the cost is of being a true follower.

Realizing that it isn't about the awesome worship music, the prayer you prayed, that perfect Pastor you want who gives you feel-good-messages, the props and motivational speakers, the high profile speakers that get paid mega bucks to come in just because they are popular.

But after this is all taken away, and the high you got from all that "stuff" wears off, the emotional train you were on at the "big event" rolls to a stop, your mind quiets and you hear the truth of Jesus whispering to you:

"It's not about the "bread," but the bread of life. Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me..."

If you wanna be my disciple, you must hate everyone else in comparison...people are gonna hate you, they are gonna mock you, you're gonna have troubles, tribulations and be persecuted and reviled for my sake.

I want you to put others above yourself, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you...

NOW jesus gives us the chance to leave. This is the time to decide!

(Is Jesus part of your life?) When He says to you:
"Are you ready to be all in? Are you ready to make me #1?
To Love me with ALL your heart, soul, strength and mind!?
Are you ABIDING in Him?

It is Peter who speaks for all of them.

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

There is no one else to whom they can go. They know there is eternal life in His words. Then Simon peter confesses: We believe and we know!

It is in hearing and trusting that certainty comes, that the mind and heart are enlightened and the will is moved to decide.

And what do they know? That He is the Chosen One of God, His very Son, the Messiah!! It is not factual, conceptual knowledge that they have been given, but personal, intimate trust that He is the One. They will cling to Him for the rest of the journey.

Peter's loyalty was based on a personal relationship with Jesus. There were many things he did not understand; he was just as lost and puzzled as anyone else.

But there was something about Jesus for which he would willingly die.

When it comes down to it, Christianity is not a philosophy which we accept, nor a theory which we give allegiance. It is a personal response to Jesus Christ.

But rather, It's the allegiance and the love which a man gives because his heart will not allow him to do anything else.

This is the point in our lives when we have truly EXPERIENCED Jesus, when we have seen Him and savored Him, and once that happens, there is no going back, because you have finally tasted the bread of life. **Ps. 73:25-28.**

So when He asks that question, I can say: *"Lord, to whom shall I go? You have the words of eternal life, and I have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Lord, I have experienced the Bread of Life, and none of that other bread I ate before could ever fill me like you do.*

70 Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

(vs 70 "did I not choose you")

If you feel like you are trying hard to live up to being a believer and being worthy to serve, know that our calling has more to do with the performance of Jesus than us "getting it right and impressing Him"

SUMMARY

Jesus had many disciples at various times in His ministry, but many walked away when the going got tough. They wanted the super hero Jesus, so when He verbalized His expectations to them, they wanted nothing to do with it and they weren't trying to hear it.

They grumbled among themselves, and when Jesus checked them with even more reality, that it wasn't about the bread and miracles and demon casting, but about abiding in Him, and that it wasn't those things that give life, but rather the Spirit; and that none of them could follow Him unless they were given to Him by the Father. That was the final straw for most, and they walked away.

Jesus looked at the rest and asked if they wanted to go also. But those who stayed had truly tasted the Bread of Life and understood there was nowhere else to go for life, and had some sense of just who Jesus was. Jesus reminded them that it was Him who chose them.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Do we take offence at and grumble about the things of God? Have we forgotten what Jesus did for us and what He took us out of so much that we grumble about minor things? Let's check our hearts and always remember God's gracious deliverance.
2. Are you just in this Jesus gig for yourself, or for Him!? Have you denied yourself, picked up your cross and truly following, or are you a pew potato and only willing to go so far as it is comfortable for you, and as long as things meet "your" standards?

3. Jesus doesn't want to be a "part" of your life. He wants it all or nothing. Are we willing to make that commitment with all it entails, or do we continue to play the "christian" game? Anyone can wear a cross, but are you willing to "BEAR" one? What is holding you back from being ALL IN?

PRAYER

Lord, you don't make it easy for us to follow you. It's not simply a matter of uttering a little verbal formula and getting out ticket stamped, or even being a good and loyal church member. Your claims are radical, and they will completely change everything that we say and do from that moment on! Call us out and lead us on Jesus! Thank you for choosing us and it is our prayer that all who hear these words which are the bread of life, will feed on them and come alive!!