

John 6:60-69 Walk with the Lord! Pentecost 14 Aug. 30, 2015 (Child – pencils old and new)

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father who guides us to life through our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Jesus clearly challenged people as He called them to believe in Him in John 6:60-69

These are Your Words, heavenly Father to help us to walk by faith in Christ. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

Some time ago, I remember hearing world mission counselor Pastor Steve Petersen describe a trip to villages in the Peruvian Amazon River Basin. He left a city by car, transferred to a small boat, and then a guide led him by foot into the jungle. He recalled seeing a terrible looking bug crawling on the back of the man in front of him. He brushed it off. A minute later, the man behind him brushed something off his back. Since it was a long way to get to the jungle villages the last part of the trip ended in the near darkness. Pastor Petersen noticed glowing pairs of eyes from large spiders along the path used to lure their prey. He noticed other glowing pairs of eyes along the trail and he prayed those animals would not harm him. He was so thankful to get to the village. He was especially thankful for his guide who led him safely there.

Spiritually, we are on a walk through jungle of life. There are more dangers for us than just large spiders and animals in the dark. We have the devil and his temptations in our sinful world. We would never get to heaven if we did not have a guide. Jesus is the guide for our daily life. God invites us to:

Walk with the Lord!

First, we need Jesus' guiding Word. In our verses Jesus had been talking with Jews who had followed as His disciples. Many of them had seen the miracles Jesus did and they wanted more. But, then Jesus took them in a new direction as their guide saying, He was the living Bread that God sent from heaven. He told them to eat of Him, take Him in spiritually through faith that He was not just a man, but God's chosen Savior. They couldn't understand how Jesus could come from God yet they knew His mother and family and that He was from Nazareth. How could Jesus be more God's prophet who did miracles?

Because of Jesus' claims, it states in our verses, "*On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you?'*" (v.60-61) Does the lack of being able to understand something from God keep us from believing? These disciples wanted to use God's Word to fashion what they wanted it to say. Jesus gave them His word to change their thinking so that they would walk on God's path that would save them.

Their goal, since they did not have faith, was selfish gain. They wanted food, protection, and happiness. What was wrong with that? If that is the only thing they wanted, without regard for eternal life, they came to the wrong guide. Jesus told them, "*The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*" (v.63) They were looking for a guide to help them fulfill the desires of their sinful flesh. Jesus came to destroy their sinful desires and give life through the spiritual means of His Word. Sadly, many did not believe. It states, "*From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*" (v.66) They stopped walking with Jesus physically because they never listened to His guiding Words to develop a faith to walk with Him spiritually.

We pray that it will be different for us. When Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they wanted to leave, too, Peter responded, "*Lord, to whom shall we go?'*"(v.68) What other options do we have that are better than Jesus? Should we follow ourselves? Apart from Jesus we are spiritually blind. We can't see how we can approach God and live. Without Jesus we are spiritually dead. Even if we could see, we can't move forward to life with God on our own. And by nature we are spiritual enemies. We don't want to follow God

even if we could. If we can't trust in ourselves, we could put our trust in other people. But, we know that even the best of people have faults so that we will always be disappointed in what they promise. That leaves the devil who is behind all the false religions of the world. He would lead us to believe lies: that murder is good in the name of religion, that history is not about truth but only a story to manipulate others, and that Christianity is for the weak who cannot stand on their own. The devil's purpose is to lead us into the middle of the spiritual jungle of life and leave us there to die in our sins that he may devour us.

But, **second, we walk by faith with Jesus!** It is a challenge to walk by faith. It means that we need to depend on Christ whom we don't naturally want to follow. The majority of the disciples left Jesus to look for someone else. The 12 disciples were suddenly in the minority. The same can happen to students at a secular university. A majority of the teachers and students are not walking by faith in Christ. That happened to me after I left Bethany Lutheran College and went to a university. Many of you are working at jobs where people do not walk by faith in Christ. They want you follow their example to talk and to do, no matter how ungodly it is. It is in those and many other situations like it where we find ourselves outnumbered by unbelievers. That is when Jesus calls to us in His Word, "You don't want to leave too, do you?" (v.67)

Peter's answer is just what we need, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" (v.68) Peter and the other close disciples had heard Jesus' words and knew that they were following the right guide. Jesus had proven to them that He had their best interest in mind. He had fed them and cared for them. He had protected them. And best of all, He had taught them the saving truths about God. He was going to die for them so their sins would be forgiven. Through faith in Jesus' work alone, they were on the road to heaven. There was no other way. All other paths led to hell. There was too much to lose by leaving Jesus. They realized that only those who walk by faith in Him will be saved.

Peter said of Jesus, "*You have the words of eternal life.*" (v.68) Jesus' words were like a map to heaven, but they also became the transportation to get us there. By God's grace we have been able to read God's Word and follow it by faith. We trust in Jesus who walks with us like a Good Shepherd. Jesus promised, "*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish....*" (John 10:27-28) We'll be able to finish our walk with Jesus because He gives us what we need. When we read, study, and discuss His Word, He gives us certainty instead of doubt, strength against temptations, and resolves to stay with Him when others are going away.

Peter said in our verses, "*We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*" (v.69) Jesus appeared weak as a humble man. While on the cross Jesus looked like a failure. Yet, God had set His holy Son apart to die so that His justice would be satisfied and the power of sin and death would be destroyed. Jesus' forgiveness has been won. He is risen to give us life that will never end!

Hopefully, we'll never need to walk through the jungle paths of the Amazon River Basin. But, we cannot avoid the jungle of temptations and discouragements that surrounds us in life. Jesus is not just our guide. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life to get us to our destination of heaven. Our strength is in Jesus who is the Lord of all. It's sad to see anyone turn from Christ and lose faith. With Christ's help we will remain with Christ as our guide and we can pray for others that so that they will hear the saving truth of Jesus. We can tell them: "To whom shall you go? Jesus has the words of eternal life. Walk with the Lord."