

### **John 6:66-69 To whom shall we go for life? Pentecost 14 August 26, 2018**

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You know God grace and peace and are confident that it is yours through Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. In John 6:60-69 we hear the concluding words of Jesus. He had already fed 5,000 and later called Himself the Bread of Life, telling people to figuratively eat His body, that is, to receive Him by faith. This is Your Word heavenly Father. Challenge us by it to more closely follow you by faith in Your Word.

Dear Christian Friends,

In our verses Jesus had been talking to the “disciples.” The word disciple is used here in ways that may be confusing, because the word has different applications. The word disciple describes people who follow after a teacher. Some people followed Jesus to oppose Him. They never believed, but were with Him to find a way to discredit Him as a teacher. A larger group followed Jesus with high expectations. I’d call this second type of disciples the “fair weather” followers. They liked to hear Jesus speak with wisdom and authority and were amazed at His miracles. They considered Him a prophet of God and hoped, after being fed as part of the 5,000, that He would set them free from their physical misery. But, there was the third group, like the Apostles, who believed what God had taught in His Word. They knew the truth about Jesus to remain with him.

Today there are still three groups: 1. unbelievers who openly mock God’s truth, 2. people who think they are godly, but only by their own terms, who uncommitted to the true Savior revealed in God’s Word, and 3. there are true believers who are committed by faith to following Christ and His Word.

#### **To whom shall we go for life?**

**First**, we know that we should always be in group three, but **we’re tempted to be people who are not committed to Christ**. Look at verse 60. On hearing all that Jesus had to say about being the Bread of Life which they were to “eat” by faith, *“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?” (John 6:60-61).* God does not offer people His Word to offend them so that they die in their sins. But at the same time, anyone who truly hears what God has to say will be confronted by the truth. No one wants to admit sin. But if they do have to face it, they have two options: they can try to save themselves by works or they can look to Jesus alone to save them. The Apostle Paul began on one side of self-righteousness. But later he saw that he had been opposing God’s plan and purpose for sending Jesus. Some people try to make their own version of God. But Jesus said, *“He who is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23).* God said, *“You shall have no other gods.”* Page 2 The true God saves by grace through Christ alone or not at all. People are either spiritually alive in Christ or they are spiritually dead in our sins. There is no third option.

Like at Jesus’ time, many people think that God’s Word should include anyone, not matter what they do. But, God does not want to turn away people from Him. I’m sure that Jesus’ heart was breaking as many followers left Him. Jesus knew that if He did not tell them the truth, there would be deadly consequences because of their sins for those who refused to believe in Him. He came to give them life forever with God. But, they chose sin over Jesus who could free them from their sins. It was like they were in chains in a dungeon and unable to escape. Jesus was willing to enter with a key to set them free, but they locked the door to Him. That is what people do spiritually when they refuse to listen to His Word. Jesus later said, *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).*

It states in our verses, *“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him”* (v.66). The crowds went back to their old way of life. They returned to superstition and to living in terror of God. They tried to save themselves, but were never certain if they had done enough. They were always looking for someone to lead them, but always were disappointed because they didn’t have Jesus. Those disciples didn’t plan to leave God, they just took a wrong turn that led them deeper into sins that kept them from God. Sadly, some would end up like Judas, one of the 12. He rejected Jesus as his Savior and took his own life to his eternal judgment (Acts 1). God forbid that such a thing happens to us!

As many disciples left Jesus, it was a true crisis for the few who remained. Would they follow the crowd? Later, as Jesus was rejected by Jewish leaders, 100’s more people turned away. We pray that we may never be led astray from our faith by false teaching or by sinful temptations!

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Rather, **second, God help us to see that Jesus is the only person to follow.** As many others were leaving, Jesus asked the 12, *“You do not want to leave too, do you?”* (v.67) Peter stated why he would never want to leave Jesus: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”* (v.68). What Jesus offered was more precious than all the riches of the world! His words had the power to give eternal life! What could be more important than that?

How could Jesus’ words offer eternal life? Peter called Him *“the Holy One of God”* (v.69). He was Page 3 referring to Jesus as the Son of God who became human. Despite many temptations, including so many disciples who left, Jesus remained blameless. He let His holy blood be shed on the cross as the sacrifice to pay for all sins of all people, even for those who had rejected Him. By God’s grace, we believe that Jesus’ blood took away our sins and made us clean before our holy God. This is what gives us life. It is so precious to us, that even if family or friends should turn away in sin or unbelief, we will hold firmly to Jesus’ saving truths. Like Joshua in our first reading, we can stand up again what is wrong and remain with the Lord.

That is what Peter confessed on behalf of the 12 disciples. He said, *“We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God”* (v.69). Through the same Word, the Holy Spirit has taught us the truth. Despite our rebellious nature, He called us to be sorry for our sins. He gave us faith in Jesus as our Savior! We are the blessed people of God! One reason that we gather for worship with each other, beside the fact that God commands it, is that we are reminded that we are not alone as Christians who hold to the truth. We are glad to be with those who are certain of eternal life through the saving work of Jesus. Right now only God sees all who believe. But, in heaven we will be amazed as we are joined by millions and millions of other believers!

Only Jesus gives us the true life we need. To whom else can we go except Jesus, who forgives our sins? Who else but Jesus restored us to new spiritual life when we were dead in our sins? Who else but Jesus provided a loving eternal relationship with our Creator God? Who else but Jesus can offer blessings that last forever? Truly, we should value Jesus so much that we will not let any wrong move us! Peter wrote, *“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires...”* (1 Peter 1:13-14).

So, what kind of disciples are we? Are we like group 2, going along with the crowd but not really trusting in Jesus? Are we forgetting how dedicated Jesus was for us? He lived and died to give us life! Even now He is in heaven and is interceding for us. If we are that special to Him, should He not be precious to us? Let us remain with Jesus by hearing His Word often and be certain that His blessing will be ours! Even our all-knowing God will not see a single sin to condemn us on Judgment Day because Christ has taken away our sins by paying the punishment in full. Through Jesus we have life with God now and it will only be better as we fully experience life in heaven. Amen.