

Pentecost 13 8/18/24
John 6:51-69 15B

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?" SIMON PETER 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."

Jesus says, *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever"* (Jn 6:51). Jesus is the living bread that came down from heaven. Eat of this bread, that is, have faith in Jesus, and you live forever. It's really that simple and it's really that fantastic. Super fantastic, really. The reason it's so super fantastic is that everlasting life in heaven is very different than life in this world.

Forever life has none of the pain, suffering, sorrow, separation, death that we have to deal with so much in this life, in this world. Eternal life is all about the bliss, the joy, the glory, the majesty of being with Jesus forever. Who wouldn't want that?

Evidently, many people don't want that because when Jesus said, *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever,"* many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him. These were not hangers on; people who had nothing better to do. These were His disciples. These were people who walked with Jesus, who believed in Him – people like you – yet, they turned back and no longer walked with Jesus.

And here's why they did it. When Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever", the disciples heard it and their reply was, "This is a hard saying;

who can listen to it (v. 60)?” Put yourself in their sandals. The disciples of Jesus were of a Jewish background. And because they were, they had been taught the Old Testament and they knew the part where God said this, “*I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people*” (Lev 17:10).

And now, along comes Jesus and He says this,

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (Jn 6:53-56).

Blood? Really? You don’t want to do that because you know what God has said about blood. So, when Jesus starts talking about drinking blood, this is a hard saying, so they turned back and no longer walked with Jesus.

If we are honest, little has changed since these words were first spoken. We’re fine with Jesus being a nice guy. Everyone wants Jesus on their side when it comes to their causes, their politics, their opinions. Everyone likes to pick out a few favorite sayings of Jesus here and there and go merrily on their way refusing to listen to all that He said. Because, honestly, Jesus said a lot of hard things our itching ears don’t like to hear; things that just rub us the wrong way.

Like this: “*I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire*” (Mt 5:22). Or, when the Savior says this, “*I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Mt 5:28). How about this: “*If your brother sins against you, go and*

tell him his fault, between you and him alone” (Mt 18:15). And then there’s this: *“If you love Me, you will keep my commandments”* (Jn 14:15). Come on, Jesus! This is a hard saying, Jesus!

And, then, there’s hardest saying of all. When Jesus says, *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever;”* what He means is this: “There is only one way to have eternal life and that is to eat of my flesh and drink of My blood, which is a way of saying, you must have faith in Jesus”. If you want to live forever, you must believe in Jesus. Our Lord Himself says, *“No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn 14:6). And *“No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him”* (Jn 6:44). Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, the one and only, way to eternal life. This is a hard saying.

It is a hard saying because you have family and friends who are wonderful people. They are kind, generous, tender-hearted, they’d give you the shirt right off their back. They’d never hurt anyone; they wouldn’t throw rocks through your windows or steal your fishing pole out of your garage. It’s just that they don’t believe in Jesus. They may subscribe to some false religion, or no religion at all. The point is: the world and you look at them and conclude that they are “good” people. You look at them and think that they don’t deserve to go to hell. They deserve heaven; they’ve “earned” it, right? And along comes Jesus and says, it’s Me or no eternal life. This is a hard saying.

So, rather than talk to them about their sin and Jesus, you find that it’s just easier to walk away and no longer follow Jesus. You’ve done it. You’ve walked away. And, that is called **sin**.

So, here’s the IMPORTANT question for you, Dear Child of God: To whom shall you go? Where are you going to go? Who are you going to

turn if you are not going to follow Jesus? Are you going to find a teacher who will tell you what your itching ears want to hear? This is what Paul warns us against in our Epistle reading,

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them;

There is only one place for us poor sinners to go and Peter tells us where it is – *“Lord, to whom shall we do? You have the words of eternal life.”* Jesus has the words of eternal life, and they go like this, “I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” “Take, eat; take, drink; this is My body, this is my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

Because of your sin, there is no way you could have eternal life. So, Jesus came into this world and did for you what you could not do for yourself. He lived a perfect life, obeyed all of God’s commandments for you, even the HARD sayings for you, on your behalf. He also did something else for you that only He could do – He gave His flesh and His blood into death for the life of the world. He did that upon Calvary’s cross for all your sins. And three days later He rose again to bring life and immortality to light for you.

Jesus comes to you and speaks His words of eternal life into your ears. He does it when He pronounces the absolution over you. He does that when he combines His Word with water and pours it over your body in your baptism. He does it again when He unites His Word with bread and wine to feed you His life-giving Body and Blood. When you receive these

words of eternal life, you receive forgiveness of all your sins. With your sin forgiven, death no longer has any power over you and you have eternal life.

It's really that simple and it's really that fantastic. Super fantastic, really. Yet, it is a hard saying. When you are tempted by the devil, the world, and your own sinful desire, turn and walk away from the teacher who tells your itching ears what they want to hear; turn and walk away from Satan's lies. Walk back to Jesus, the Holy One of God. Which is why we pray this Sunday,

“Grant us to without all doubt to know Your Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that following His steadfastly walk in the way that leads to eternal life.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.