



Text: John 6:60-71¹

Series: *Life in His Name* – The Message of John’s Gospel

Title: Part 17 ... Every Disciple’s Crisis: Do I Stay or Walk Away?

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Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Why do you follow Jesus?

Are you hoping that faith in Jesus Christ will make a positive difference in the quality of your family life?

- But what if the kids rejects Jesus?
- What if your spouse rejects Jesus ... and you?

Are you hoping that faith in Jesus Christ will make a positive difference in your career?

- But what if the economy crashes and you have to declare bankruptcy?

Are you hoping that faith in Jesus Christ will enable you to overcome sickness?

- But what if God gives you a “thorn in the flesh” like he gave to the Apostle Paul?

What if faith in Jesus costs you...

Your career ... I read this week of an academic who lost a position because his peers found out that he believed in God who created the universe.

Your family ... I once worked for a man whose family held a funeral for him when they found out that he had become a Christian.

Your health ... almost every week we read about believers who lose their lives or whose health is broken in prison because of their faith in Jesus.

Your money ... what if Jesus calls you to give it away?

What then? Why would you want to follow Jesus? **What is your spiritual “bottom line”?**

That’s what Jesus establishes with his disciples in the passage that we’re about to read. After a long teaching on “the Bread of life” that follows his miraculous feeding of over 5000 people, Jesus brings his teaching home and forces a

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question on his disciples that makes them ask themselves the question: **why are we staying with Jesus?** As we read from John's Gospel this morning I want you to watch for the moment when Jesus asks the decisive question. There are several questions between verses sixty and seventy-one but I think you'll quickly notice the key question.

I'm reading John's Gospel, **chapter six, verses fifty-one to seventy-one.** This is God's holy, inspired and authoritative Word. As I read it this morning I invite you stand with me. If you're unable to stand, please remain seated, but as a sign of respect to God's Word, let's stand together as we hear from God this morning.

Jesus said...

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" ⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, 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? 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."

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 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." 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.

Why did some disciples stay with Jesus while many disciples left him? What made the difference between “the Twelve” and the “many”? I believe what made the difference was the nature of the spiritual bottom line they had established.

First of all, let’s look at the people who walked away from Jesus.

The first thing I want us to notice is that they suffered from a profound misunderstanding.

Those who walked away from Jesus were spiritually offended

“When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?” John 6:60-62

Jesus’ teaching was more than confusing and hard to understand to many of those who followed him; it was offensive to them. “What is all this talk about eating his flesh and drinking his blood? We were OK with Jesus while he talked about spiritual life as “bread” but what is all this about giving his flesh as bread?”

What Jesus was saying really wasn’t all that confusing. It really didn’t take too much thinking to understand that Jesus meant that “believing” and “eating” were the same thing. It really didn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that Jesus wasn’t calling on them to engage in some form of cannibalism. Jesus said...

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.” John 6:47-50

Jesus clearly makes a parallel between “believing” and “eating.” To believe in him is to eat the Bread of life. I don’t think that these people were so dense as to misunderstand that. They understood the metaphor. They knew that the people in the wilderness literally ate bread and died, but they could understand that Jesus was offering eternal life to those who would believe in him.

But what blew these people out of the water is what Jesus says in the second half of the next verse. Jesus said...

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.” John 6:51



I don't think that this is a problem. They understand the metaphor of bread and believing in Jesus as eating the bread. It's what comes next that creates the trouble. Going on, Jesus said...

“And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:51

What do you think Jesus is talking about when he refers to the “giving” of “his flesh” “for the life of the world”? Anyone? He's talking about dying! He's talking about the Cross!

Why were they offended? Because they knew what he was talking about and they didn't like it.

“But Jesus, we need bread, O Bread of Life. I have a big family to feed, my brother lost his job and my sister needs help with her sick kids. All we have left from lunch are twelve baskets of broken pieces. Where's dinner going to come from if you die? **What good are you to us if you die?**” (John 6:26ff)

Jesus had already answered them...

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” John 6:26-27

“But Jesus, O Messiah, O Son of David, we have social issues that need your attention. We have Romans that need to be removed from our country. We need you as king right now in Jerusalem. You have no idea the mess we're in. **What good are you to us if you die?**” (John 6:14-15)

Jesus had already refused their appeal...

“Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” John 6:15

“But Jesus, Holy One of God, I'm really enjoying the meetings. I mean all those wonderful things you did for the sick ... that was spiritually moving stuff! And feeding us all from just five loaves and two small fish, that was amazing. But if you're dead, who's going to carry on the meetings? Who's going to provide us with the show? **What good are you to us if you die?**” (John 6:30ff)

Jesus had already offered them much more than the “bread and circuses” they wanted...



“they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’... Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6:30-31, 35

They had their agendas for Jesus and a dead Jesus simply didn't fit their plans. “What good are you to us, Jesus, if you die?” They were offended! “Messiah's don't die! They meet our needs. They amaze us with great wonders. So, Jesus, if you're really the Christ, the Son of God, then meet our needs, get on with the show and drop this talking about dying!”

Secondly,

Those who walked away from Jesus were spiritually lifeless

Jesus said to them...

“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. 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.)” John 6:63-64

Although these people had been following Jesus, listening to his teaching, eating the bread he provided, and getting excited that God's Messiah had arrived to be their king, these people had missed one very important element of Jesus' teaching. In fact, they missed the most important thing ... they didn't believe him! Long before they were offended by Jesus' reference to “eating his flesh,” they were already off track because they had not responded to his call to “believe” in his words.

Jesus had already taught them...

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” John 5:24

This vast multitude had heard the words of Jesus but was still spiritually lifeless because they had not believed his word. They had had spiritual experiences, but they still didn't have spiritual life. They had been with Jesus, but they still didn't have his life in them because they didn't believe in him.

To “believe” in Jesus' word is to take his Word as, well, as Gospel. It's to accept what he says as the very Word of God. It's to come to a settled conviction that Jesus is speaking the truth when he says...



“No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” John 3:13-15

To believe in Jesus’ word is to accept as truth his declaration that he has come down from heaven to bring us God’s gift of eternal life. To believe his word is to accept the fact that when Jesus called God, “My Father,” he was “making himself equal with God.” (5:17-18) These people were willing to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet (6:14) and even as king (6:15) but their understanding of him fell far short of full belief in him as God’s Savior from heaven and because of that they were spiritually lifeless.

Thirdly, and most significantly,

Those who walked away from Jesus were spiritually powerless

Jesus wasn’t surprised that many of his “fair weather” disciples left him because he knew that ultimately only those who the Father enabled could come to him. Jesus said to them...

“This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” John 6:65

Twice in his teaching on the bread of life Jesus had referred to the role of the Father in enabling people to come to Jesus.

First, Jesus spoke this reassuring word to his disciples. He said...

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” John 3:37

The Father’s hand is unerring in guiding people into the arms of Jesus. Not one on whom he places his hand will fail to reach Jesus’ arms and once there not one of them will fall from Jesus’ arms.

Secondly, Jesus spoke another reassuring word when he said...

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:44

I want you to understand how reassuring this word is intended to be. Jesus describes the Father “drawing” people to Jesus. It’s the same word that appears in the story at the end of John’s Gospel where Jesus instructs his disciples to let down their nets into the lake to catch fish. The nets become so loaded with fish



that they were unable to haul the net into the boat. Instead, they could only drag it to shore. Jesus asked them to bring him some of the fish...

“So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.” John 21:11

The word “haul” is the same word that is translated as “draw” in chapter six, verse 44. The net is almost breaking with fish, but it doesn’t break, and not one fish was lost! Do you see the picture? This great “haul” of fish was intended to picture the great “haul” of people that the Father would draw to Jesus through the ministry of the disciples as they went about preaching the Gospel.

I wonder if we understand just exactly how dependent we are on the Father’s grace and mercy “hauling” us to Jesus. My sinful rebellion is such that without his strong ropes of mercy dragging me to shore, I’m sure I’d wriggle free and be lost.

One of my fondest memories of fishing with my father was of a catching a bass that didn’t get away, but tried awfully hard! We were fishing off a beaver lodge just before dusk ... that’s the best time to catch bass. I knew the fish was a big one by the way it hit my line and then made a bee-line for the mass of sticks that made up the beaver lodge. The fish pulled our boat in to shore ... that was another sign it was a big one ... and right toward a log that we could see jutting out of the water. Without word of a lie, the bass went under the log, wrapped the line around a spike on the bottom of the log and then it lay upon under the log as tight to the log as it could get. We were able to get a net under it, trapping it against the log and it took my dad and I the next half hour, in the dark by flashlight, to pry the line off the spike and quickly haul the fish into the boat with the net before it jumped off the line.

We are like that bass and God is like a fisherman who will not let us go! We are fighting to get away, but his grace “hauls” us in! Please understand that Jesus is categorically declaring that without the Father’s hand on the rope, drawing us to Jesus, we are lost! I am so grateful this morning for His grace to me. How about you?

What was the difference for those who remained with Jesus?

First of all,

Those who remained with Jesus understood their spiritual need

Jesus asked the Twelve...

“Do you want to go away as well?” John 6:67



Thousands of people had just walked away from Jesus. This question from our lips would have sounded like insecure pleading, but not from Jesus. Jesus knew. Jesus had always known that they this multitude was made up of many who didn't believe him. The question wasn't prompted by self-pity but compassion for the Twelve. D.A. Carson, commenting on the structure of the express and the context in which occurs writes...

*The question is not moody, glum, but a challenging **'Surely you don't want to go away too, do you?'** The question is asked more for their sake than his. They need to articulate a response more than he needs to hear it. One might guess from the flow of the narrative that the defection has been so substantial on this occasion that not many more than the Twelve actually remain.²*

Jesus is asking his disciples to declare their spiritual "bottom line." "So, gentlemen," he asks, "where do you stand?"

Peter spoke for the Twelve and said...

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" John 6:68

Peter and the twelve knew that their real need wasn't for more bread, or for political peace or for more spiritual experiences – they knew they needed eternal life and they knew that no one else could offer it to them.

Please understand that Jesus' words do give guidance for life and I believe they do improve the quality of our family life, our careers and even our health. His words give guidance. His words give healing and His words give hope to those facing disease and death. But all these things are passing needs. They are not our basic need. Paul summarized the spiritual bottom line of life when he wrote...

"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." 1 Timothy 6:6-7

We can't take our money out of the world. We can't take our careers out of the world, and we certainly can't take our health out of the world ... none of us gets out of here alive! We come in with nothing and we leave this life with nothing with one exception ... either we have believed Jesus' words and have eternal life or we reject Jesus and eternal life.

Do you have eternal life? Will you leave this life with the one thing you can take with you?

²D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 303.



Secondly,

Those who remained with Jesus were convinced that He was their only hope

Peter, speaking for the Twelve, said...

“we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” John 6:69

Peter expresses his conviction about Jesus as something that he and the Twelve “have” resolved. Notice the word “have.” We “have believed” and “have come to know.” The twelve are resolved: Jesus is the Holy One of God.

The expression “the Holy One” or the Holy One of Israel” is found thirty times in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah.

“I am the one who helps you, declares the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 41:14

“For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” Isaiah 43:3

“Our Redeemer—the Lord of hosts is his name— is the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 47:4

Again and again, “the Holy One” declares through Isaiah that he will redeem his people, that he will save them and that he will care for them and provide for them. Peter and the others still had much to learn about Jesus but this much they knew and this much they believed: ***Jesus was from heaven and every word he spoke was God’s Word of salvation to them.*** They had come to a settled conviction that they would believe every word from Jesus and follow him wherever he would lead them. They pinned their hopes on Jesus. They focused all their faith on Jesus. Whatever Jesus might do or teach them, hard saying or not, they would believe him because he was “the Holy One of God.”

Have you resolved in your heart and mind that Jesus is your only hope? Have you come to the place where you have said, “Yes, Jesus,” to whatever he might say to you or ask of you?

Finally,

Those who remained with Jesus were there because Jesus had chosen them to stand with him

Jesus said...



“Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve?” John 6:70

Ultimately what held these men to Jesus’ side wasn’t their faith, as resolved as they were. In the end it wasn’t their understanding of their need for eternal life that kept them with Jesus. They stood with Jesus because the Father had drawn them to Jesus and Jesus had chosen them to stand with him.

And among the Twelve stood one who didn’t share their belief in Jesus but Jesus had also chosen him but for a different purpose. Jesus later said of Judas...

“I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ [Psalm 41:9]” John 13:18

In betraying Jesus from inside the confidence of the Twelve, Judas would fulfill a prophecy about the way in which the Messiah would meet his death – betrayed by the hand of a friend.

But I’m glad that Jesus’ choice of you and me has a much more blessed purpose. Jesus says to you and me...

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” John 15:16

But what if the path of fruit bearing takes us through the loss of career and wealth and even our lives? Are we willing to follow Jesus? Can we say with Paul ...

“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:7-11

Author Randy Alcorn recalled a two-month missions trip that he and his family took some years ago that included a visit to Egypt. While in Egypt, Alcorn's hosts took him to visit an abandoned graveyard located at the end of a garbage-lined alley. The host pointed out one tombstone in particular—that of William Borden who died in 1913, heir to the Borden dairy estate. William was a millionaire by 21, but he renounced his fortune, giving nearly all his wealth to missions. His heart's



desire was to take the gospel to Muslims in China. On his way to China, William stopped in Egypt to study Arabic, but four months later he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25.

Alcorn writes:

*I dusted off the inscription on the headstone of Borden's grave. After describing his love for Christ and his commitment to and his love for the Muslim people; and his sacrifices for God's kingdom; the inscription ended with some words I wrote down on the spot—and I have never forgotten them to this day. The inscription ended with, "**Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life.**"*

Then Alcorn wrote, "And I thought, **Lord, what's the explanation for my life?**"³

Is the promise of eternal life in Jesus your spiritual "bottom line"?

- **Invitation to the Lord's Table**
- **Songs of Communion:**
 - Nothing but the Blood (#337)
 - I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (#602)
- **Benediction**

³ Randy Alcorn, "Money and the Disciple," 2004 Bethlehem Conference for Pastors; submitted by Van Morris, Mt. Washington, Kentucky | posted 12/27/2010 Copyright © 2011 by the author or Christianity Today International/ PreachingToday.com.