

John 6:60-71 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson
LORD, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

Let's pray and ask God for His help today in this final portion of Jesus' John 6 message. "Father, I thank You for Your love for us, Your commitment to us, and for Your Word which helps us find you and helps us learn to know You, and which reveals You to us. Father, use this text today to bring the lost to you, and to lead those of us who know You to be sold out to You as our treasure, as our only hope. Father, give us today a reality check to find out if our love for you is unconditional, unwavering, or if we are conditional disciples like many of these disciples in our text, people who called themselves disciples before they heard Jesus' Bread of Life message, and then they walked away. Father, show us today if many of us want Your salvation, but don't want to follow You as Lord and Master. Don't let us stay on the fence about You. May we each become Your sold-out disciples. We ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Let's jump into this amazing conclusion to Jesus' mighty Bread of Life sermon that He preached in the synagogue in Capernaum, the next day after He fed the 5,000 men, and probably 20-30,000 people including women and children. Jesus fed them all with one boy's lunch of five barley loaves and two fish, after He gave thanks to His Father for His provision. This text reveals three major responses of Jesus' disciples, (1) The majority of Jesus disciples found Jesus' teaching too hard to swallow or follow, and they walked away, (2) The son of Simon Iscariot, Judas, one of Jesus' disciples appeared to follow Jesus' words, while living a lie, and (3) The eleven of Jesus' disciples whom Jesus called, following Peter's confession, found Jesus as their only hope, and were sold out to Him.

Which group are we in today? All these people who either stayed with Jesus or who left Him, professed to be His disciples? Where do you stand? Where do I stand? Two of these three responses show us we can be called disciples without truly being Jesus' disciples. It's tragic, but true. Examine these three responses of Jesus' disciples. One of these responses fits you and me. Every person in the world will either walk away from Jesus, appear to believe in Him, like Judas, but live a lie, or be sold out to Jesus as their only hope.

THE MAJORITY OF JESUS' DISCIPLES FOUND HIS TEACHING TOO HARD TO SWALLOW OR FOLLOW, AND THEY WALKED AWAY. (I.)

Look closely John 6: 60-63. In verse 60, we read, "When many of His disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" It is apparent that many of Jesus' disciples were exposed for who they really were by Jesus' Bread of Life message. Let's first examine this group who grumbled at Jesus words, went back to their old practices and beliefs, and walked away from Jesus rejecting Him and His message. Today, beloved, millions appear to be Jesus' disciples as did many that day in Capernaum, but given time, the truth comes out as the teaching of Jesus sifts, sorts, and proves who is and who is not His disciples. Obviously, this is not the only passage of scripture telling us that more people walk away from Jesus after appearing to follow Him, than those who stay and are sold out to Him.

Professing to be Jesus' disciples is not the same as possessing Him and being His disciples. In His Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness."

Notice verse 60, "When many of His disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" Was Jesus not speaking intelligibly? No! Then what made Jesus' words hard? We read the answer back in John 6:36, "But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe." What was hard about Jesus' teaching? Many refused to believe Him. The Greek word for hard is **skleros**. It means hard, tough, harsh, severe, austere, stern, inhuman, uncivil, stiff, brittle, dried out, very objectionable, offensive, and impossible to accept or believe. Many of these disciples objected to this whole Bread of Life message Jesus gave.

Notice that Jesus could read their minds in v. 61. We read, "But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this?" The Greek word for offense is **scandalidzein**. It means to trap, referring to a crooked stick to which bait is fixed in a trap, which after being sprung, is a deadfall trap that kills its victim? Jesus knew that His words give life, but they can also be fatal. He was warning this group of grumbling disciples before they defected and walked away. Jesus told them, "Is My teaching today proving fatal to you?" It's still true today. Jesus' teaching still polarizes people and fatally traps many in their unbelieving rebellion. Jesus went on to say in verse 62, "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" Jesus was telling them, "If you doubt that I am the Bread of Life come down from heaven, you won't believe Me anymore if you see Me ascend back to My Father.

Jesus was prophesying His coming ascension, clearing up their false ideas that they were to physically eat His flesh. For those that believed Jesus, at His ascension, they would know afresh Jesus was talking about spiritually partaking of His flesh and blood. Jesus went on to say in v. 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." There were 4 major reasons given in John 6 as to why these many disciples found Jesus' words offensive, harsh and hard, so they walked away.

First, (1) Jesus rejected their political hopes. Go back to John 6:15. What happened after Jesus fed the 5,000? We read, "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." These many followers believing Jesus was their Messiah, wanted this moment to embrace Jesus as king and overthrow Rome and set Israel free of oppression. Jesus was not willing to be used to fulfill their political hopes, nor will He be used to fulfill our political hopes today." Millions in America are trying to use Jesus to fulfill their partisan political hopes. On January 6, 2021, many people, who claimed Jesus was on their side, stormed the Capital in

Washington. One of the saddest parts of that awful day was that many in that march were carrying signs about Jesus being their reason to attempt to take control of America by force. That storming of Washington was not Jesus' will. Jesus said clearly to Pilate before He was crucified, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews." Jesus will not be used for any party's political agenda. Sadly, many Bible believers are misled, thinking it is our job as Christians to take over America through what many have thought was our moral majority.

Jesus came in weakness to change our world not by force, but by sacrificing Himself at Calvary. If political power is our only hope, then our only hope is to make unholy alliances with unbelievers in a misguided mission. God wants each of us who know and love Him to live a peaceful and quiet life under the banner of His cross, and let the world see Jesus in our surrendered lives. Many today are disillusioned to think that Jesus doesn't want us to take over America by force.

One more aspect of this using of Jesus to get our way is played out in Christian homes where husbands and wives fight for control. This desire to use Jesus to control others is carried over into millions of churches, where elders, deacons, pastors, boards, and committees fight for an agenda. Jesus is grieved when we get involved in power plays in church. Knowing our desires, He withdraws from us to pray for us. Seeking control prevents church growth and stifles the hope of revival.

Secondly, Jesus rejected being no more than the supplier of their physical needs, to become a divine vending machine giving us all we want. Look at verse 26, "Jesus 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." Jesus certainly wants to meet our physical needs, but His primary desire is to meet our spiritual needs. Jesus' physical miracle in the feeding of the 5,000 was pointing to a much greater miracle Jesus wanted to give them Himself, the Bread of Life, and give them Himself, by giving His flesh and blood to die on the cross for us. This week I listened to Pastor Luke Simmons ask a question, "What if heaven were a place where we would get everything we want, it's the best bed and breakfast, the best meals, the best tools, the best games, the best hunts, the best connections with friends, the best weather, no sub-zero weather and harsh winds, and no sweltering heat, that we had everything we every hoped for, but that God wasn't there, would you be okay with that? If that would be okay, then sooner or later, you will walk away from him like these disciples did. Jesus wants to be the Bread of Life that we feed on, who nourishes us, sustains us, and fills us and thrills us, our everything.

Thirdly, Jesus claimed to be more than Moses and the law, more than religion, because He wants a personal relationship with us, not just have people who do church once a week to keep Him happy. Look at verses 32-35. Jesus isn't satisfied with us being religious people like the Jews were, keeping the law, going to synagogue or church, and getting home and saying—that's enough for this week. No, Jesus came to bring us Himself so we would fall in love with our Savior. Jesus isn't all about our works, efforts, and goodness trying to better than others.

Jesus isn't seeking for us by our efforts to get to Him, but He's all about Him being the Bread of Heaven come down to us to transform us. Millions today appear to follow Jesus by trying to be a better person. If going to church makes us better spouses, employees, or happy, or better than most others around us, we are all in for that once a week. That's not Christianity. That's a false religion.

Fourthly, these many disciples walked away because Jesus was too extreme.

These many who walked away could see Jesus was after them coming to Him to find hope, truth, and life.

People are still here today. Many want a moderate Jesus, their co-pilot, and they have no intention of letting Jesus takeover their lives. Look at Jesus' words in v. 40 and look at His words in v. 54. Jesus was saying the same thing in v. 54, but using a spiritual illustration. To believe in Me, He said is like finding all your spiritual nourishment, enjoyment, and satisfaction in Me. Notice John 6:66. It is devastating. "After this, many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him." How many of us are candidates for turning back? Do we have "ifs" with Jesus, "if you heal me," "if you give me a spouse," "if you give me a raise," "if you take away my terminal disease," or "if I get my way in my home or in my church or on my job, or "if my candidate wins." Is Jesus too extreme for us? Would we find reasons to walk away from Him and say, "I'm out!?" Not out of the church, for we may stay in church. But are we going to be out from Jesus. Jesus never said, "Sorry, I was too extreme and offended you." Jesus will let us walk away from Him if we won't be sold out to Him alone.

THE SON OF SIMON ISCARIOT, JUDAS, ONE OF JESUS' DISCIPLES, APPEARED TO FOLLOW JESUS' WORDS WHILE LIVING A LIE. (II.)

Notice closely John 6:64-65, and verses 70-71. In verse 64, Jesus said, "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.)" In Jesus' divine foreknowledge, He knew Judas would betray Him. Yet knowing Judas was a deserter, who would walk away before the cross, Jesus allowed Judas to hide out with Him as one of the twelve. Jesus knew Judas didn't believe Him and that he would betray Him. Jesus told His disciples, "I chose all twelve of you, but my betrayer among you is a devil." So, Judas went on faking it until the Last Supper, when Jesus dipped the morsel in sop, and said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

Why would Jesus call Judas a devil? Jesus didn't soften the blow from frightening Judas from his evil path. Jesus tried every way to turn Judas' heart away from Satan to Himself. Our Savior's love and grace is totally unfathomable. Though Jesus knew Judas would not repent, Jesus never gave up. His grace still kept pleading with Judas when Jesus knew Judas would not repent. Peter saw it all, and he wrote in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord...is patient toward you, not wishing or willing that any should perish, but that all should come to or reach repentance." How many professing disciples are apostates, when their appearance in church places them like Diotrefes, in leadership, but they don't really believe. This hypocrisy of Judas was more than ordinary hypocrisy; it was lying deceit. It makes us all know Jesus reads us like a book. None of us fool the Lord. God forbid that one of us here today would appear to be Jesus' disciple but be living a lie. May it never be!!!

THE ELEVEN OTHER DISCIPLES JESUS CALLED, FOLLOWING PETER'S CONFESSION, FOUND JESUS AS THEIR ONLY HOPE. (III)

Notice closely John 6:66-69. In verse 68, Simon Peter answered Jesus' question, "Do you want to go away as well?" (KJV—"Will you also go away?" Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jesus wasn't surprised that He now was down to twelve disciples and one of them was a devil. Go back to verse 63. Jesus said, "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." Then Jesus added in verse 65, "No one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father." Jesus wasn't surprised that most of His disciples didn't like His words and were offended by Him. These many other disciples had not listened and said yes to the wooing of the Spirit of God. None of us can reason our way into salvation, and logically figure Jesus out. God has to give us His grace, and we must respond by opening our hearts to His wooing, as He calls us, "Come to Me, and I will in no wise cast out." Do you remember Jesus' call in John 6:37? He said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out!" Nothing Jesus says will ever make sense without the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

Jesus knows suffering sifts us. He knows some of us draw closer to Him during hard times, while others say, "I didn't come to Jesus for this. I'm out." Hard times expose our hypocrisy. Is this a hard message for us today? Maybe like Jacob, we're wrestling with the Lord, saying, "Am I just a convenient disciple or am I sold out. Peter answered Jesus, in vs. 68-69, "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." I listened to one of you recently testify of your moment of truth when you said, "Lord, I'm done using You to get my way. I want to follow You and You alone. I'm sold out to You." Many years ago, one of you came to Jesus. You went home to tell your husband, "I love Someone more than you."

Jesus is coming to us today and saying, "Do you also want to go away? Will you go away like the others?" Was Jesus worrying He was going to lose all His twelve disciples? Never? No, Jesus knew where they stood, but He gave these 11 disciples a moment to testify where they stood. Jesus is giving us the same chance. This is Jesus' question today, "Where am I with You, Lord? Are You my everything? Are You Lord only if my dreams come true and I get my way? Believe me, we have 3 choices. All of us will go somewhere, walking away, staying in church, but living a lie, or being sold out. Jesus is pleading with us today to find all our satisfaction in Him. Will He hear us say, "No one else but You has the words of truth, of eternal life? You are the only Holy One of God, the unique Creator and Savior. There is none like You." I ask you to testify with me the words of Matt Maher, in his song, "Lord, I come, I confess, bowing here I find my rest. Without You I fall apart, You're the One that guides my heart. Lord, I need You, O I need You, Every hour I need You, My one defense, my righteousness, O God how I need You. Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more, where grace is found is where You are, Where You are, I am free, holiness is Christ in me. Teach my song to rise to You, when temptation comes my way, when I cannot stand, I'll fall on You, Jesus, You're my hope and stay." If you are on the fence, come completely to Jesus today. Amen.