

JESUS, THE ONE TRUE SAVIOUR
Sermon for the 12th Sunday after Pentecost, 2021
John 6:51-69

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, John 6:51-69: ⁵¹ **I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live for ever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.”**

⁵² **Therefore, the Jews kept arguing sharply with one another: “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”**

⁵³ **Therefore, Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father has sent Me, and as I live because of the Father, so that person who feeds on Me will also live because of Me. ⁵⁸ This is the Bread that has come down from heaven. It is not like the bread that the fathers ate, they died. He who eats this Bread will live for ever.”**

⁵⁹ **He said these things in the synagogue, while He was teaching at Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Therefore, when they heard this, many of His disciples said, “This is a hard statement. Who can listen to it?”**

⁶¹ **Since Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples were grumbling about this, He asked them, “Does this offend you?**

⁶² **Then what if you see the Son of Man go up to where He was before? ⁶³ The Spirit is the One who gives life. The sinful human nature is of no help at all. The Words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴ However, there are some of you who do not believe.”**

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and the one who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “That is why I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been given to him by My Father.”

⁶⁶ **After this, many of His disciples went back and did not walk with Him any longer. ⁶⁷ Therefore, Jesus asked the Twelve, “Surely you too do not want to go away?”**

⁶⁸ **Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Many people today *scoff* at the thought that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, is the Saviour. While there are those who are faithful and place their faith in the risen Lord, yet such people appear to be a “dying breed.” Well, this is nothing new. In his day, the Apostle Paul had seen that the message of the cross was “*to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness*” (1 Cor. 1:23). When he taught in Athens, Paul was called a ‘babble,’ literally a ‘scrap-collector.’¹ That was an uncomplimentary term suggesting that Paul was like a bird, picking up seeds of knowledge here and there, but not really knowing much at all. Even Jesus Christ, when He was active in His ministry, found that the majority of hearers refused to hear His message. We could be forgiven for thinking that we are still living in those times, as nothing has changed for the past 2000 years.

When Christ walked upon the earth, many were willing to follow Him from place to place as long as He did not make any demands on them, but they would not regard Him as their divine Saviour. When Jesus explained to His followers the purpose of His coming into the world and had asked them to receive Him as their personal Saviour from sin, they had said: **“This is a hard statement. Who can listen to it?”** In fact, it seemed so hard that **“many of His disciples went back, and did not walk with Him any more.”** When Jesus noticed this, He turned to the Twelve and said: **“Surely you too do not want to go away?”** This is the same question we are asked today. With so many temptations to turn from Jesus, with so much on offer from the world around us, do we want to turn our backs on Jesus and not walk with Him any more?

Jesus had performed many miracles that were witnessed by many people. News about Him soon spread throughout the

¹ Acts 17:18

country. In Capernaum, where Jesus now was, He had taken the opportunity to speak to the crowd about the “**living Bread that has come down from heaven.**” He had encouraged the crowd to seek this Bread of life, and in so doing, they would become partakers of the glories of heaven. “**Jesus told them, “Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.**”⁵⁴ **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day.**⁵⁵ **For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.**⁵⁶ **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him.**” What did Jesus mean by these words?

The people thought that Jesus must have been speaking of actual, physical eating. But that was not so. To eat and drink was to believe in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had come into the world to give His flesh and blood, to deliver sinful mankind from sin, death, the devil, hell and all other evils. The eating is done with the heart, not with the mouth. The heart is nourished and fed by faith in Christ.

Many of Jesus’ disciples were present when He delivered this sermon, and when they heard that their Master had not come to establish an earthly kingdom and that He would not provide them with earthly advantages, they were offended. In fact, “**many of His disciples went back and did not walk with Him any longer.**”

Now, we must not confuse these disciples with the Twelve. The disciples who did not walk with Jesus any longer had previously and openly shown their adherence to Him, but they did not persevere. Why did they grumble? Simply because their own reason would not believe the claim of the Master. They were more concerned with earthly things than with heavenly things. They were more concerned with what they *wanted*, not with what they *needed*.

There have been many since those days that have acted exactly in the same way. Many have walked beside the Saviour, but then God’s Word has demanded of them that they do something or believe something which their reason could not accept. And so, they have turned away and do not walk with Him any longer.

If we are asked: “**Does this offend you?**” then we must stand strong because there is a tendency today to water down the Word of God so as *not* to offend people. But when Christ demands of us obedience and complete submission to Him, then we must remember that Christ Himself has said, “**The Words I have spoken to you are spirit, and they are life.**” The Word of God creates faith and life in those who hear.² A proper understanding of the Word, being guided by the Holy Spirit, will take God for what He says in His Word and will cling to it with all one’s might – even to the words that do offend us, that is, the parts that call us out on our sin. But we will cling even firmer to the message of the cross, the words that tell us of Jesus, words that are spirit and life.

In spite of the wonderful truth which they had just heard from Jesus, and in spite of the many convincing proofs, these disciples were not at all convinced that Jesus’ flesh could give them eternal life. Many of those who had previously followed Him now turned away. They gave up their adherence to Him and withdrew from His presence. Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked them: “**Surely you too do not want to go away?**”

Jesus continually addresses this same question to you and me. He knows all too well that we are in danger of following the example of those whose faith is not sound and who have deserted Him. We all know of some who have walked for a while with Jesus but then have become tired of their service toward Him and tired of His Word. The temptation is great to leave the narrow way and walk on the broad highway on which one would find such earthly pleasure. Many people beckon us to join them by saying: “*Come with us. Enjoy life while you can. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.*”

Jesus addresses this question to us, for He knows so well that there are others - enemies of our souls, who will try to induce us to walk with them. They will use all within their power to lead us away from Christ. And then there is Satan, who “*is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). He is continually trying to destroy the works of God and finds no greater pleasure than to cause us to sin and gradually to win us from Christ. We need to be ever reminded of his cunning snares, lest we lose our faith. The world and our own sinful flesh are powerful allies of Satan. If we listen to their voice, we shall fall and be lost.

Finally, what answer did the Twelve give their Master? Did they reply: “*We too, shall leave You, for these sayings are too hard, Your demands are too great, and we can no longer follow You?*” Jesus did not have to wait too long for an answer. Peter replied: “**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.**” Peter’s answer is wonderful. Peter meant to say it was utterly unthinkable that they should desert their Master. Jesus had spoken to them the most beautiful words of eternal life, words that bestow

² Romans 10:17

spiritual and eternal life, the Gospel of life. Who else in the whole world could give them more? There was no one else who could supply them with what they needed; therefore, they had no desire or intention to leave Him.

We, too, have heard **the Words of eternal life** and have come to the conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our personal Saviour. The truth of His Word has fully taken possession of our hearts and minds. And we also, like the apostles, see the indifference of the vast majority of men towards the Saviour of mankind, and the falling away of many who for a time followed Jesus but have now turned their backs on Him. Jesus is deeply grieved by the defection of the multitudes, and so He turns to us today and asks us: "**Surely you too do not want to go away?**"

May we follow the example of Peter. "**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God.**" If we make this confession and promise, then we shall be truly blessed. It is to us that Jesus will say: "*Come, you whom My Father has blessed! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the time when the world was created!*" (Matthew 25:34).

God grant that all who worship here this day may never forsake the Saviour but remain true to Him unto the end. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord God, we rejoice that we are Your children because of Your constant love and mercy. We are what we are purely by Your grace. You have made us Your own, and fulfilled all Your rich promises to us. You give power and strength to Your people. Therefore hear our prayers as we come to You, not in our own name or goodness, but in the name and by the merits of Jesus Christ.

We praise You for the glorious Gospel of Your grace. We rejoice to know that You have kept Your word by sending Your Son Jesus Christ when the right time came, to give His flesh, and to rise again on the third day so that through Him we may never taste death.

We thank You for the apostles' sure witness to Christ's resurrection in Your holy Word, on which our faith can stand firm. Fill us with love and faith in our risen Lord, so that we may live in a joy that words cannot fully express, and that we may confidently wait for eternal fellowship with You in the life to come.

Give us Your Spirit's power to remain strong in our faith, in spite of all the doubt and ridicule of our age. Keep us each day in repentance for sin, in humble reliance on Your mercy, and in the peace of Your forgiveness. Give us such love for You that we may devote our whole lives to serving You in cheerful obedience.

Pour Your Holy Spirit's power on the Church, that it may take Your Gospel to others, and proclaim Jesus Christ to them as their only hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Defend Your Church from its enemies and from all false teaching, that it may know no other Gospel than the one You gave it once and for all.

We pray for our country. Give us leaders in all walks of life who respect Your commandments, promote what is good, and oppose what is evil, so that our citizens may live in harmony, peace, and uprightness, and show concern for the good of all. We pray for our nation where so many are struggling under the latest delta variant of covid-19. Be with those who are unwell, and grant them healing. Guide the doctors and nurses and all others who are caring for ill.

We pray for our homes. Give all parents a burning desire to teach their children to know, love, and respect You in Jesus Christ. Enable all families to live together in peace, love, and true wisdom.

Hear the prayers of the suffering, the bereaved, the needy, the homeless, the wounded, the worried, and the despairing. Lead them in mercy out of all that distresses them. Deliver us from every evil of body and soul, and at our last hour mercifully take us from the troubles of this life to Yourself in heaven.

Give us these things, O Father, and whatever else is necessary for us, in the name of Jesus, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

12th Sunday after Pentecost

Proverbs 9:1-10

¹ Wisdom has built her house. She has cut out her seven pillars. ² She has slaughtered her animals. She has mixed her wine. She has also set her table. ³ She has sent out her servant girls. She is calling out on the highest place in the city: ⁴ "Anyone who is gullible should turn in

here!" She has been telling the one who lacks sense: ⁵ "Come, people, eat my bread and drink the wine that I have mixed! ⁶ Forsake gullible people and live! Walk straight on the road of understanding!"

⁷ A person who corrects a mocker gets an insult, and a person who rebukes a wicked person incurs abuse.

⁸ Do not correct a mocker, that he may not hate you!

Correct a wise person, that he may love you!

⁹ Give instruction to a wise person that he may become still wiser! Teach a righteous person that he may increase in insight!

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Ephesians 5:6-21

⁶ Do not let anyone deceive you with empty words! For because of these sins God's anger comes on disobedient people. ⁷ Therefore, do not be partners with them! ⁸ For once you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as people who belong to the light! ⁹ For light produces everything that is good, righteous and true. ¹⁰ Approve what is pleasing to the Lord! ¹¹ Do not have anything to do with the works of darkness, from which no good can come, but instead continue to expose them! ¹² For it is a shame even to mention the things that they do in secret. ¹³ All things that are exposed are made visible by the light. ¹⁴ For everything that is revealed is light. For this reason, it is said: "Wake up, you who sleep! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!" ¹⁵ Therefore, be very careful how you live! Do not live as unwise people but as wise people! ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity! For the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the Lord wants! ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to wild living! Instead, be filled with the Spirit! ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord! ²⁰ Always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! ²¹ Be subordinate to one another out of respect for Christ!

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