

13th Sunday after Pentecost, John 6:56-69 (Proper 16)

The Disciples' Response

Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

Psalm 34:15-22

Ephesians 6:10-20

Preached at the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville, SC on Sunday August 22nd, 2021.

The steadfast love of God, the life of Jesus Christ, and the growth of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. Amen.

*Today we conclude a **four-part** series from the gospel according to **Saint John**
concerning Jesus revealing himself as
the **True Bread** that **came down** from heaven. ____

Over the past few weeks,
we have **heard** Jesus refer to the **crowd of people** gathered before him
by **three names**: **The Jews**, **His disciples**, and **The Twelve**. ____

Now we know "**The Twelve**" were that small group of individuals
personally selected by Jesus to **follow** him and **learn** from his actions. ____

Those referred to as "**His disciples**" in today's reading
were a number of people - including The Twelve -
who heard Jesus speak and saw him perform many miracles.

(Some members of this group wished to make Jesus **King of Israel**
and drive out the Romans.) ____

And those mentioned as "**The Jews**"
were **most likely** the **religious leaders** from **Jerusalem**. ____

All of these people apparently were present
when Jesus fed the crowd of **over 5000** with just **two** fish and **five** barley loaves.

This same group later caught up with Jesus in the synagogue at **Capernaum**. ____

*In our gospel reading today, those called "**The Jews**"
did not believe that Jesus was the **Living Bread** that **came down** from heaven.
They knew his parents – Mary and Joseph.
... And so, they were **turned-off** by anything he **said** and **did**. ____

Those called "**His Disciples**" were **discussed** by Jesus declaring
that if you do not **munch** on his flesh and **guzzle down** his blood,
you do not have **life** within you! ...
They found this saying **too hard** to accept!
They found this teaching **too difficult** to acknowledge!
... And many of them were **offended** by such a notion! ____

And so, we are told in today's reading:
"After this, many of His disciples **drew back**,
returned to their **old** associations, and no longer **accompanied** him." ...

Following this **reaction**,
Jesus turned to his selected group of **Twelve** and asked them:
"Do you **also** wish to go away? Do you **also** desire to leave me?" ...

It is now that we hear those **impressive** words of **Saint Peter**
on behalf of the rest of this **chosen** group;
words that we often **sing** during our liturgy just before the Gospel is proclaimed:
"...Lord, to whom shall we go? **You** have the words of eternal life." ...

These **Twelve** individuals had come to **believe** and **know**
that **Jesus** is the **Holy One** of God:
God's **Anointed One** - the **Christ**, the **Messiah!** ____

They knew the **true** message of **eternal life**
could only be received through **Christ Jesus!** ____

*Returning to Peter's question "*To whom shall we go?*",
this was the same question my wife Beth and I asked ourselves - and others -
when our son Jason was born back in **2005**:
To whom shall we go for **child-care**?
To whom shall we go for **baby supplies**?
To whom shall we go for **pediatric guidance**? ...

And when we moved to Greenville County, South Carolina
back in November of **2019**,
again we asked the question "To whom shall we go?":
To whom shall we go for **medical** help?
To whom shall we go for **automotive** repairs?
To whom shall we go for **hardware** needs? ...

Throughout human existence, mortals continue to ask this question:
"*To whom shall we go?*" ...

But when it comes to finding the answer to this question pertaining to **eternal life**,
there is only **one place** to go ... to **Jesus Christ!** ____

It is he, (and he alone), who has the **words** of **eternal life!**
It is he, (and he alone), who proclaims the **true message** of **life eternal!** ____

If we wish to learn about **everlasting existence**,
the place to turn to is **Christ Jesus** - the **Holy One** of God! ____

*Now even though the sayings of Jesus can sometimes be **hard** to understand,
this group of Twelve were **dedicated** to remain with Christ.

They **believed** in him. They **trusted** in him. They had **faith** in him.
No one else could take the place of **Jesus** in their lives. ____

And when it comes to discerning **our eternal existence**,
the **only** place to go is to **Jesus**.

It is through **faith** that God the Father **draws us** to Christ:

We experience this when we **study** the Holy Scriptures.

We experience this through song, prayer, Word and Sacrament -
when we **attend** worship services.

We experience this when we **gather together** and **help** one another;
following Christ's example of **sharing** our time, talents, and treasures.

Jesus Christ is our **Bread of Life**.

Jesus Christ is our **Cup of Salvation**.

Jesus Christ is our **Redeemer**.

Jesus Christ is the **True Vine, The Way** ...

the **Lamb of God** who takes away the **sin** of the world!

Jesus Christ **is** the **Holy One** of God! ____

*In the **first** reading appointed for today, **Joshua** tells his people:

"...choose this day whom you will serve..."

And then he goes on to say:

"...as for me and my household, **we** will serve the Lord." ...

Many years ago, **Bob Dylan** had out a song titled "You Gotta Serve Somebody."

And in this song, Bob sang:

♪ You gotta serve somebody.

It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord,

But you gotta serve *somebody*. ♪ ...

Who is it that **we** serve?

To whom is it that we have **committed** our lives?

To whom is it that we go to hear the **words** of **eternal life**? ...

Martin Luther said: "All that is required of us 'is simply a **believing heart**.'" ...

Brothers and sisters, ours is a God who **chooses** us, **forgives** us, and **loves** us.
Where else **can** we go? ...

When we follow **Jesus**, yes his teachings may sometimes **offend** us;
but we also know, he gives us the words of **eternal life!**

It is our heavenly Father who **invites** us and **gives** us the **grace** to follow **Christ**
- even through the “hard sayings.”

So don't **brush aside** or **resist** these “hard sayings” of Jesus;
but **come together, pray, and discuss** what their meanings may be.
... And as we do so, we will **grow** in **faith!** ____

*Believe as **Peter** did
that **Jesus** can change our lives
because he indeed **has** “*the words of everlasting life.*” ____

Pray to the Lord to **increase** our faith
that we may **grow** in our relationship with him
and in the **knowledge** of his love for us! ____

Come! Share in the **Eucharistic** meal!

Come! Share in **all** of **Jesus'** life:
his ministry,
his suffering and death,
his joyous resurrection,
and his promise of eternal life!

Come! Partake of the **body** and **blood** of our Savior
- creating a **strong bond** between Jesus and his believers -
which contains within it,
the **promise** of **new** and **everlasting life!**

Come! **Munch** on his flesh and **guzzle down** his blood!

Consume Jesus Christ ... who truly is ...

The Living Bread which **came down** from heaven!

Amen.