

13<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup>, 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.