

To Whom Shall We Go?

(John 6:)

I. Introduction

- A. Anderson, “No Bible characters, just folks hanging around while Bible was written”
1. If you were hanging around with Jesus, what kind of character would you be?
 - a. **Pharisees**? Hung up on rules/tradition and dismiss Jesus out of pocket?
 - b. **Disciples**? Taking the risk of faith, even if sometimes a bit haltingly?
 - c. **Crowd**? Bouncing back and forth depending on whether he fed you?
 2. No way to know! Question, “Where is it that you are you hanging out now?”
 - a. Like the people in John’s gospel, we have to make a choice about Jesus
 - 1) If we are not careful, we may try to hedge our choice like they did.
 - 2) They tried to turn Jesus into the kind of Christ they could accept.
 - b. Jesus did not permit that then, and He will not permit it today!
- B. Find a Bible and let’s do a quick survey of **John 6**, our daily reading Wed-Thur
1. John opens with feeding of the 5000 (**6:1-15**). *Story is in all 4 of gospels*
 - a. John gives us a glimpse of impact this miracle had on the people (**6:15**).
Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.
 - b. So Jesus is at the zenith of popularity... and knows that it won’t last
 2. Why? Because the crowds were following Jesus for the wrong reasons!
 - a. Some saw him as Messianic king who would free their nation.
 - b. Others were a bit less patriotic; they saw free food (**John 6:26**)
I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill
- C. So what does Jesus do? Well, it seems like He tries to thin the herd a bit!
1. He make an spiritual object lesson from feeding the 5000 (**John 6:35**)
Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. .
 - a. This is essentially the point Jesus made to woman at well (**John 4:14**)
 - b. Here Jesus explains WHY He is the bread (and water) of life (**Jn 6:46-47**)
No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

2. They are confused, but Jesus simply refuses to make this simple (**6:54-56**)
⁵⁴ *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* ⁵⁵ *For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.* ⁵⁶ *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.*
 - a. If they missed the metaphor before, then this must really blow a gasket!
 - 1) This was definitely not the Messiah for whom they were looking!
 - 2) Jesus is neither fighting the Romans nor handing out free food here!
 - b. He is speaking in Spiritual riddles, and that's NOT what they want (**6:60**)
On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"
 - 1) Jesus didn't read Carnegie's "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*"
 - 2) Wasn't playing political expediency, "*Tell 'em what they want to hear*"
 - c. Jesus absolutely refuses to make this hard teaching any easier (**6:61-63**)
Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.
3. Jesus would not change his focus to fit the expectations of his audience
 - a. They would follow Jesus only as long as He fit their idea of a Messiah.
 - b. But he refused to follow their expectation and specification—forget it!
 - c. So the crowds left Jesus and would follow Him no more (**John 6:66**)
From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

II. To Whom Shall We Go?

- A. This is something of a watershed; Jesus will never again know such popularity
 1. As **John 7** opens, Jesus avoids Judea because they want to kill him (**Jn 7:1**)
 - a. What do his brothers say? "*You outta go hang out down in Judea!*" (**7:3**)
 - b. That's kind of harsh, don't you think? Why did they say that?
 - c. John says, "*For even his own brothers did not believe in him*" (**Jn 7:5**)
 2. So you can understand if Jesus is a little insecure about those close to him
 - a. He wonders out loud if the twelve apostles will leave him as well.
 - 1) After all—the ones who left are called "*disciples*" or "*followers*."
 - 2) Disciples and family were bailing out on him... *would the apostles?*
 - b. Peter's response is perfect, even if it is accidentally perfect (**Jn 6:68-69**)
To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One

B. What does Jesus mean by “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood?*”

1. We hear this as Eucharist, where we symbolically eat flesh and drink blood
 - a. So you often hear this text as a communion devotional (*as last week*)
 - b. John’s first readers would certainly have heard communion here
 - c. This language should remind us of commitment we make in communion
 - 1) Paul says “*We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*” (**Rom 6:2**)
 - 2) What does Paul talk about? Baptism! Jesus death → death to sin
 - d. In the same way, communion should remind us of our death to sin
2. What Jesus is talking about here isn’t communion but **COMMITMENT**
 - a. He’s saying that to be a disciple, we must be totally committed to him.
 - b. If someone is totally absorbed by something, we say they are *eaten up*.
 - 1) When I first started dating Lynn, Dad gave me words of wisdom—
“*Son, she’s so sweet right now you could eat her up; later, you’ll wish you had*”
 - 2) Well, he was half right—I’m still eaten up (*the girls say “whipped”*)
 - c. Jesus is telling us that being a disciple means being eaten up with Him

C. Peter said only Jesus has the words of life— there is no other place to go.

1. The crowd would follow Jesus only if He met their terms--
 - a. They would make him an earthly king if He would give them victory
 - b. They would follow Him as long as He provided them with food
 - c. But if he didn’t live up to his end of the bargain—they were history!
2. Jesus’ hard saying was, “*If you follow me, you will have to be eaten up*”
 - a. Jesus must become our spiritual food and our spiritual drink.
 - 1) **Old Story:** Young man asks old rabbi the true secret of holiness
 - 2) Rabbi takes him to stream out of village and points, “*There is secret*”
 - 3) When he looks, the old man pushes his head under and they struggle
 - b. He says, “*You must want God just as desperately as you wanted air*”
3. Jews wanted a Messiah they could manage, that’d fit their specifications
 - a. But Jesus refused to be tamed; He would not be managed or manipulated
 - b. He demanded and still demands everything— to be food, drink, air
 - c. “*And I... I’m desperate for you; and I... I’m lost without you*” (**Song**)

III. Conclusion

- A. What a great sentiment, “*I’m desperate for you!*” A word of warning here...
1. Jesus will only allow us to follow him on His terms, not on our terms
 - a. The crowds of John 6 wanted a conquering king and a provider of food
 - b. Jesus would not be either of those—so the crowds left him
 2. And Jesus today still refuses to be domesticated and will not be managed
 3. We must follow on his terms, we must change to fit Him... not visa-versa
- B. Like in **John 6**, we think we have Jesus figured out and He gives a hard saying
1. Some see Jesus as a guarantee of health and wealth and financial success
 - a. The Jesus says, “*Give all you have to the poor and follow*” (**Mk 10:21**)
 - 1) He demands we choose between God and Money (**Matt 6:24**)
 - 2) Camels thread needles easier than rich go to heaven (**Matt 19:24**)
 - b. Rather than success, he warns us that the world may hate us (**Jn 16:18**)
 - c. We say to Him, “*Lord, those are hard sayings.*” **And they are!**
 2. Some see a Jesus that wants above all else for them to be happy.
 - a. After all, Jesus was against the legalism and pickiness of the Pharisees
 - b. They decide Jesus paints in broad strokes and doesn’t care about little sin
 - 1) Jesus says cut off hands and pluck eyes that cause us to sin (**Mt 5:30**)
 - 2) He tells us disciples to be His disciples carry cross daily (**Lk 9:23**)
 - c. We hear Him and say, “*Lord, those are hard sayings.*” **And they are!**
 3. Some see a Jesus who accepts only them as true disciples and true church
 - a. They have the doctrine figured out, all the pat answers... well, down pat.
 - 1) Then Jesus accepts the tax collectors before Pharisees (**Lk 18:14**)
 - 2) Jesus says that He has many sheep not part of our pen (**John 10:16**)
 - b. When we think we have Jesus figured out, he shocks with a hard saying
- C. Some are not willing to follow. Jesus asks you, “*Will you leave me too?*”
1. In reality, the world we live in demands we answer that question daily
 - a. After all, it is a lot easier to join world than it is to beat it, is it not?
 - b. Are we going to hear Jesus hard sayings and turn to walk away?
 2. Peter words ring down, “*Where will we go; you have the words of life!*”