

March 25, 2007 (5th Sunday of Lent)

[The Questions of Lent]

“The Discipleship Question: Do You Wish to Go Away?”

John 6:53-69 (NLT)

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So Jesus said again, "I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you. 54 But those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them at the last day. 55 For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. 56 All who eat my flesh and drink my blood remain in me, and I in them. 57 I live by the power of the living Father who sent me; in the same way, those who partake of me will live because of me. 58 I am the true bread from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever and not die as your ancestors did, even though they ate the manna."

59 He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

60 Even his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?"

61 Jesus knew within himself that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? 62 Then what will you think if you see me, the Son of Man, return to heaven again? 63 It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But some of you don't believe me." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who didn't believe, and he knew who would betray him.) 65 Then he said, "That is what I meant when I said that people can't come to me unless the Father brings them to me."

66 At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. 67 Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?"

68 Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. 69 We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

What is Jesus talking about here? “You must eat My flesh and drink My blood?” Ukk! He can’t be asking us to be cannibals.

Cannibals capture three men. The men are told that they will be skinned and eaten and then their skin will be used to make canoes. Then they are each given a final request. The first man asks to be killed as quickly and painlessly as possible. His request is granted, and they poison him. The second man asks for paper and a pen so that he can write a farewell letter to his family. This request is granted, and after he writes his letter, they kill him saving his skin for their canoes. Now it is the third man's turn. He asks for a fork. The cannibals are confused, but it is his final request, so they give him a fork. As soon as he has the fork he begins stabbing himself all over and shouts, "Now try and use this for your canoes!"

Two cannibals were are eating a **clown**, one turns to the other and says, does this **taste funny** to you?

So what is Jesus talking about when He says, "I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you."

To understand what Jesus was talking about you really need to read the entire chapter 6 of John. The chapter begins with Jesus feeding over 5000 people (v9) with five barley loaves and two fish. And (vs14-15 [NLT]) When the people saw this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, He is the Prophet we have been expecting!" Jesus saw that they were ready to take Him by force and make Him king, they didn't get it. The One they were expecting was not a king to rule temporarily on earth. He came to give His life for sin, resurrect from the dead, giving eternal life to all who believe and then reign as King forever over the Kingdom of God. They wanted to make Him king without having to go to the cross, so He went higher into the hills alone to get away from them.

The next day the crowd found Jesus again (vs 25-35 [NLT]), but Jesus said to them, "The truth is, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understand who I am. But you shouldn't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Son of Man, can give you. For God the Father has sent me for that very purpose."

They replied, "What does God want us to do?"

Jesus told them, "This is what God wants you to do: Believe in the one he has sent."

They replied, "You must show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What will you do for us? After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! As the Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " [in other words, they were trying to manipulate Jesus into filling their stomachs again.]

Jesus said, (First of all) "I assure you, Moses didn't give them bread from heaven. My Father did. And (second) now He offers you the true bread from heaven. [not the bread for your stomach, but the bread for your soul]. I'm the true bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... I am the bread of life."

(vs 41-42) Then the people began to murmur in disagreement (whispering complaints to each other) first saying, "This is Jesus, the son of Joseph. We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?" Jesus knew within Himself that his disciples were complaining and says to them in v62 (you don't believe I came from heaven) "Then what will you think if you see me, the Son of Man, return to heaven again?"

They also murmured because He said (v51), "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live." (v52) Then the people began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. We have a clue to what Jesus meant when He says in v63, "the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and

life.” He is not speaking literally, but spiritually speaking. Actually, He made it pretty clear when He said (v47), “Anyone who believes in me has eternal life.”

So, Jesus uses this illustration of the bread, because they want Him to meet their material needs, as many today only want Jesus so He will meet their material needs. Jesus is letting us know that spiritual need is much more important. God met the material needs of the Israelites as they wandered in the desert. He provided bread in the form of something they called manna. They accepted this manna and ate it, but it did not satisfy them forever. They had to eat more each day, and it didn’t sustain them forever, eventually they all aged and died. But the true bread of life is Jesus, also sent by God the Father. We must accept Him and take Him into our lives (eat of Him, learn of Him) He satisfies us or makes our life whole here on earth *and* gives eternal life. This is what Jesus is talking about when He says you must eat and drink of Him to have eternal life in you.

At first His Disciples, His learners, followers, even the 12 Apostles that He Himself chose, did not understand, but when they did understand they had another problem, would they accept it. Would they accept that Jesus is The Way, the only way, to God and heaven? Would they accept that what Jesus said was true, and that He is The Truth? And would they believe that life eternal is in Him only, that He is The Life?

All other religious teachers point away from themselves. They point people to God. Jesus points to Himself. Why? Because He is God. He says you must believe in me to have life. And His call is for your entire devotion, your full commitment to Him. That’s why He did not say take a nibble, He said, “eat...drink!” Take all that Christ offers, and offer all to Christ.

(v66-67) At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted Him because of His inflexible word that all must believe in Him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?" It is a discipleship question. Jesus has defined what true discipleship is. Have you given Jesus full rights over your life? Or, are you retaining rights in certain areas yourself? Then you are not a disciple. It isn’t a question of what you are willing to give Him; it’s a question of what you hold back from Him...that is rightfully His; and until you recognize that everything you have belongs to Jesus Christ, you are not His disciple.

As long as Jesus reveals His will to you and you choose to debate it and decide whether or not you will do it, you are not His disciple.

A disciple is a one who has a passionate love for the person of Jesus Christ, full confidence in the Word of Christ, and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience. Jesus is asking you the discipleship question this morning: “Do you wish to go away? Are you going to leave, too?” Or will you put your full trust in Jesus?

The impetuous Simon Peter, always quick to open his mouth, sometimes inserting his foot, other times saying just the right thing, but always speaking from his heart; speaks up for himself, the other apostles, and for us when he replied (v68-69), "Lord, to whom

would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. We believe them, and we know you are the Holy One of God."

Ever feel like giving up on following Jesus. Sometimes it is so hard. I remember thinking a that way once and then these words came to me; "Lord, to whom would I go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. I believe them, and I know you are the Holy One of God."

Today you must answer the discipleship question. Jesus demand your full devotion, because of Who He is. He alone can give eternal life. Commit yourself to Him today.