

**John 6:60-69**

**On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “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. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”**

**From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”**

Dear children who eat the Bread of Life. Amen

Think of all the information you currently hold in your memory bank. Passwords, famous phrases, the recipe for the world's best cheesy potatoes, the names of people, the location of places, and those invincible moves on your video game system. You have this information memorized because you need it, or think you need it. It's useful or meaningful or both. And you continue to retrieve and store new information every day. It's called lifelong learning.

Are you as competent at knowing the differences between the twelve disciples as you are at knowing the tendencies of the twelve players on your fantasy football team, or the starting five players on your favorite basketball team? Have you learned as much from the Bible the past month as you have from the internet? Parents jump through hoops to get their kids to soccer practice and swimming lessons and around the table for supper; do we make similar efforts to keep them active in their Christian faith? I think we'd all agree that the Word of God is very important to us, but we could improve our learning of it and living it. Today God's goal is to help each of us to better . . .

**Theme: Follow Jesus As A Lifelong Learner**

- 1. Accept his life-giving words**
- 2. Don't leave his life-changing love**

**1. Accept his life-giving words**

As a Pastor, I bump into many different people. It is quite interesting and sometimes quite sad what some people think and believe about God, Jesus and the Bible. I have talked to people who have come from very little knowledge of Jesus whom the Holy Spirit opened their hearts to ask if I could share more and more of God's saving Word with them – they are like sponges soaking up as much of God's goodness as they can. They are accepting and believing God's life-giving words. They are eager to be learners of God's life-giving Word

On the other hand, I have also bumped into people who have a very obvious “problem” with God and his holy Word. Whenever they bump into a portion of God’s Word that they don’t like, understand or believe, they are quick to point out their displeasure with God and his holy Bible. They aren’t accepting what is truly life-giving. These people are not learners of God’s Word.

And neither were some of Jesus’ followers as he explained to them he’s not just a miracle worker who can feed their tummies and can defend them against Roman rule. Some from a larger group of loyal followers (they’d even earned the label “disciples”) grumbled, **“This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”** Jesus knew that his life-giving words tripped them up like the violent gust of a harsh wind pushing a person off balance. “If you think I’m only an earthly revolutionist and person with deep pockets,” Jesus said, “wait till I rise from the dead and ascend to my real home in heaven!” Like some people in today’s world, some of Jesus’ followers weren’t interested because they simply had other things on their mind.

What’s on your mind? Is your tummy hungry or budget hurting? Does your heart long for attention or affection? Is your head spinning like a roulette wheel hoping to land on the jackpot answer to a few nagging problems? Or maybe you just can’t decide on a major or whether to switch cell phone plans. These are all valid earthly concerns and they take time and effort to research and retrieve data, to analyze it and come to a decision. And sometimes, they stress us out so much and occupy so much brain power that we don’t focus on the life-giving words of Jesus.

And then we’re okay with that. “Not a problem,” we think, “I was confirmed at St. Luke’s by Pastor Uetzman, Vomhof, Schultz or Gartner who taught me everything I need to know about the Bible.” As if we get to the point when we know it all spiritually, while the Bible says that even the angels long to learn more. **“The flesh counts for nothing,”** Jesus warns. Memorizing a group of facts about God is good but is worthless if not accompanied by the desire to learn and grow from the life-giving words of Jesus. By thinking we know it all, we prove that we don’t. The harsh winds of the world’s deceptive words and the devil’s poisonous whispers push us off balance. Or worse.

Jesus knows better. We want our minds to grow and bodies to remain active, and Jesus may grant that desire, but Jesus always gives us a growing and active spirit. We look for answers in a confusing world, and Jesus may give them to us, but Jesus always gives us life. **“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life,”** Jesus promises. Like the graphed spaces of a crossword puzzle waiting for words, life without Jesus’ words is just a bunch of empty boxes waiting to be filled. We can feel clever enough to devise some great sounding clues but that’s all we find in worldly wisdom – clues. The words of Jesus fill our minds and our spirits. The words of Jesus give us answers and life. Accept his life-giving words. *Follow Jesus as a Lifelong Learner.*

## 2. Don’t leave his life-changing love

I cannot help but think about all those things Jesus says to you and me that sound kind of crazy. I think about all the things in the Bible that we consider to be hard teachings. And I wonder, how many of those crazy things, how many of those hard teachings will be easily understood in heaven. How many of our questions will seem foolish in the context of God’s eternal plan of salvation? Asking such questions reminds me of one of the many quotes from Martin Luther. He said, if you cannot understand something, “then grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are.” In other words, perhaps we should allow for

the possibility that God is smarter than we are, perhaps just because we do not understand everything Jesus says to us does not mean what He says is not true.

Jesus went on to say, **“This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”** A spiritually blind person cannot come to Jesus, because he cannot see Him. A spiritually dead person cannot come to Jesus, because he cannot move. A spiritually hostile person cannot come to Jesus, because he hates Him. Only when the Father works faith in our hearts which is like turning on the light, making us alive, and reversing our hostility can a person come to Jesus. Only when the Father enables us are we able to understand the things Jesus says to us.

Are you having a hard time with one of Jesus' teachings? Then allow the Father to enable you. The Father enables us through the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:15 we are told **“the holy Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation.”** If you open your Bible and listen to what the Father says you will discover a beautiful thing about God's plan of salvation. You will discover that it is consistent. From beginning to end. There are no contradictions. That means that if you are having a hard time with one of Jesus' teachings, if you are having trouble accepting something Jesus says to you, just keep reading. Keep listening to the Father. One teaching will help you grow in your understanding of another teaching. For example what Jesus says here, **“no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him”** is the same teaching found in Ephesians 2:8, **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”** If you are having a hard time with something Jesus says to you, just keep reading.

Unfortunately, I have noticed what often happens is exactly the opposite. A person stumbles upon a difficult teaching one that offends them and they stop listening. Some leave the church. Others remain but simply tune the preacher out when he talks about things they simply cannot accept. That's also what happened in our lesson for this morning. We are told **“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”** It wasn't just His teaching that offended them, it was also the teacher, it was Jesus; Jesus offended them.

Does He offend you? That's the question Jesus asked the twelve. **“You do not want to leave too, do you?”** I feel Jesus' humanity in these words. He has spent a great deal of time and energy with this crowd of people. He has healed them, fed them, and taught them. He has grown attached to them as He watched their faith grow brighter and brighter. He was encouraged by them. He felt as if his work was not in vain. He rejoiced in the spread of the gospel. But then they stopped, they turned away, they gave up, they left. His heart was breaking for them. He knew they were in danger. He knew the devil would now convince them that all they had learned was nonsense, that they didn't need a guy like Jesus in their lives. Frustration swells inside him because he knows what He is telling them is true but he cannot make them listen. He is alone and He is abandoned. Who can he now count on, who can he now trust? Will his disciples now leave him also? Will His best friends; His closest supporters now leave him also? Are they so offended by Him? Are you?

No! Not you. You will not abandon Him. No matter how many disciples refuse to accept His hard teachings, no matter how many disciples decide they will no longer follow Jesus, You will. God knows you will just as he knew the disciples would. Jesus does not ask this question because He does not know the answer. In verse 64 John tells us **“Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.”** Jesus knew what Judas was up to and he knew what answer the other disciples would give.

So why does Jesus ask the question? He asks the question to give His disciples a chance to evaluate their reason for following Him. He asks the question so that they could confront their doubts. He asks the question so that they would have the opportunity to confess their faith. Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to say something so beautiful; so profound that it has echoed through the ages. **“Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”**

Today you are given that same opportunity. There are so many people around us who refuse to accept Jesus’ teachings. There are so many people who are offended by Jesus. But you have been given the opportunity to confess along with Peter that no matter how hard a teaching at first might seem, the words of Jesus are the words of eternal life. No matter how many foundations are offended by Him, you believe and know that He is the Holy One of God. Does this offend you? No! Not you. Praise God! By the grace of God! Jesus does not offend you. Praise God that he has given you the desire through faith to continue growing in your knowledge of Jesus’ life-saving Word. Amen