

A New Church with an Old Message

John 6:60-71

We also used to say, “**We are a new church with an old message.**” That message is reflected here in **Peter’s words**, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Before we look at those words, I want to **begin with a little history of IDC on this special anniversary....** (Share story),

John 6:60-71 highlights some basic elements of Word-driven discipleship.

By the end of John 6, we see that Jesus was larger than life. Not everyone loved him, but everyone was talking about him.

- After feeding the multitude, he has to escape from the large crowds, who wanted to crown *him king*.
- He has walked on water (vv. 16–21).
- People are coming to him for **free bread** (vv. 25ff).
- He has preached the famous “**Bread of Life**” sermon, which included some stunning statements and claims.

The result? A lot of “wanna be disciples”

- Some are legit, and some are not.
- Some are interested, attracted, but not committed.
- Some end up staying because **Jesus is “too legit to quit”** (to quote MC).

We see here 3 types of “disciples” – two who are false, and one who is a true disciple.

- **False Disciple #1: Count the cost and walk away (many “disciples,”) - v. 66**
- **False Disciple #2: Count the cost and fake it. (Judas) - vv 64, 71**
- **True Disciple: Count the Cost, and stay committed to Jesus. (Peter) – v. 68**
 - They’re not perfect. But they’re in.

This is a great moment of decision in John’s Gospel.

- It’s similar to Peter’s great confession at **Caesarea Philippi** (Matt 16), though not the same event.
- This is **John’s moment of decision.**
- John’s Gospel confronts us with a decision: **You must respond to Jesus.**
- The dividing line for John is **not race, class, education, but belief.**

Let’s look at the cost of discipleship, and the marks of discipleship.

#1: The Cost of Discipleship (60-66)

A. Can you accept His claims? (60-61)

60 – Not everyone listed as a “disciple” was a true follower of Jesus.

- **Just because someone claims to be a follower of Jesus, doesn’t mean they are.**
- **Just because someone wears a baseball hat, doesn’t mean they’re baseball fans!**

- Just because a lady wears yoga pants, doesn't mean she's doing yoga!
- Just because someone eats or drinks something that says, "Italian" doesn't mean it's Italian. ("Italian dressing," "Italian Soda")!

Some just followed Jesus around, and considered him their Rabbi, but weren't fully devoted to him. (Jn 2:23ff)

Some here begin to count the cost, and they're now drifting away.

- They begin to complain, "This is a hard teaching...."
- They complain like those in the wilderness.
- The teaching wasn't hard to understand, but hard to accept.

What is hard to accept? What Jesus says about Himself; about the bread of life; about divine grace.

Have you seen this sort of thing before? An individual gets all excited, and then they're gone?

They didn't like Jesus' words because....

- Some were more interested in food than his message.
- Some wanted a political Messiah.
- Some didn't want to give up power.
- Some were offended by Jesus' claims of being greater than Moses.
- Some were offended by his reference of eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Therefore, some find Jesus' claims intolerable so they either (1) leave the faith, or (2) "cut out" portions of Scripture.

But you can't really have Jesus without his words!

John 8:31 – (a text Strick will preach!), Jesus makes it clear who is true disciples are:

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

You can't be his disciple, if you don't abide in his word!

Peter's great confession is a confession to abide in the words of Jesus.

Mark 8:34–38

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Notice two things Jesus says in v. 38:

1. Don't be embarrassed **of "Me."**
2. Don't be embarrassed by **"My Words."**
 - "I follow Jesus, but I don't like the Bible" isn't an option.
 - You can't have Jesus without his words.
 - We follow Him by following His words.
 - You can't have anyone without their words because that's how we make ourselves known: words.
 - We wouldn't say, **"I like you very much but I'm not going to listen to anything you say...."** Try that with your spouse!
 - We worship and follow the God of revelation, not the God of tradition or speculation or our imagination.
 - **We follow Jesus by following His Word.**
 - This takes this following him out of the realm of abstractness.

Can you accept his claims? And....

B. Can you accept His cross and crown? (63-66)

i. Having spoken about his **death** (blood/flesh, **52-58**), he now speaks of the **ascension**.

62: He's saying, **"If you're offended by my teaching now, how will you respond when it's realized, as my flesh and blood are sacrificed before your eyes, and I ascend with a glorious, kingly enthronement?"**

It's important to remember that the cross and ascension are linked together. (**Isa 52:13**)

- **To my son Joshua, "A shower and deodorant go together like the cross and the ascension!" Axis body spray is not sufficient.**

Isaiah 52:13. He Was Pierced for Our Transgressions.... it begins this way:

¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely;
he shall be high and lifted up,
and shall be exalted.

Previously, John mentioned Jesus ascending into heaven led immediately to his statement of Jesus being "lifted up" to the cross (**3:13**).

- **The ascension was the culmination of Jesus' crucifixion.**
- **Jesus movement to the cross was also a movement to heaven.**
- He would return to his previously enjoyed place as the pre-existent Son of God by means of the cross.
- Cross — resurrection — ascension — these events are in an **unbreakable sequence.**
- Not only will Jesus die, but he will rise and he will ascend to heaven.

Interestingly, John doesn't really finish the thought.

Would the ascension remove the offensive (and lead to faith), or lead to further offense?

- Most likely, he's speaking about these events bringing further offense.
- The ascension would be every bit as striking as his brutal death.
- However, the alternative would also happen: people would believe after his resurrection/ascension, when previously they did not. Those in Acts 2, who had previously called for Jesus' crucifixion, believe after the resurrection/ascension.

At any rate, here's the point: how you respond to these events – Jesus' cross, resurrection, and ascension – determines your destiny.

To be a disciple of Jesus you must accept that Jesus died, rose, and ascended.

We need the Spirit to give us life (63)

63a: You need the Spirit to embrace the words of life. (Jn 3, Ezek 37)

- Only those whose minds are illuminated by the Spirit can receive him.
- John says more about the Holy Spirit than the other three gospel writers (cf. 14-16).
- We've already encountered this problem of viewing Jesus in **an earthbound way**: Nic thinking of real birth, Lady at the Well thinking about real water, or the crowd's reaction to eating his flesh, etc).

"the flesh is no help at all" – He's talking about our human fallenness.

- You need spiritual eyes to see him for who He is – the bread of heaven who gives life to the world, through his substitutionary death, glorious resurrection and ascension.
- **Luther had a famous debate with Erasmus. Erasmus thought there was "a little bit of righteousness in us" that enabled us to come to God or reject him. Luther, picking up on Jesus' words here said, "This 'nothing' is not 'a little something.'"**
- **In our fallenness, in our sinfulness, we don't come to Jesus.**
- It is the Spirit who gives life.

63b: **How does the Spirit make us alive? He does it through the Word of God.**

- He uses the Word to pierce our hearts, and change our nature, enabling us to believe in the message of the cross.
- **It was by God's word that the universe was spoken out of nothing into existence.**
- **It is by God's Word that you and I are brought from no spiritual life into spiritual life.**
- If you are having a hard time believing, don't run from the Word of God, but to it.

This is why we take Scripture seriously. The Lord brings us to life through it.

- **"Those people are intense. They're actually studying every verse of John. Who does that?"**
- What else should we do?
- This is the means by which the Spirit brings dead people to life!

64-66: Jesus is in charge; the devil is not winning

Once more, we see some strong statements about divine sovereignty.

One might think in light of all the rejection of Jesus, that the devil is winning, but these statements assure us that Jesus is in charge, and he is not caught off guard!

64: “Some of you do not believe.” The aged apostle looks back and realizes that Jesus “knew from the beginning” who were true believers.

- He knew that some wouldn’t believe.
- He knew that Judas would betray him.

65: Jesus again emphasizes one’s need of divine grace to embrace him.

- Genuine faith is a gift of grace (Eph 2:8-9)

66: “After this” for “for this reason” many walk away. They abandon him decisively.

- **Bruce: “What they wanted, he would not give; what he offered, they would not receive.”**
- They wanted bread and a political messiah.
- He offered eternal life, provided through his death on the cross.

They couldn’t accept his claims or his cross and crown. That’s the cost of discipleship.

You must embrace these claims, and follow Jesus on the Calvary road ourselves.

#2: The Marks of Discipleship (67-70)

67: Jesus then asks the twelve, “Do you want to walk away also?”

- The mystery of Christ’s person and work has been laid out, and now he calls for a decision, much like dying Caesar’s question, “Et tu, Brute?”

68-69: Then we read of Peter’s great confession.

Here are three marks of a real disciple:

1. A true disciple recognizes that there’s no alternative to Jesus.

- “To whom” It’s like Peter has considered it. No doubt all of them had considered turning elsewhere at one point or the other.
- Many of you probably have had some struggle to believe, or perhaps you have that struggle right now. Peter says there’s no alternative. Consider your options...
- **Go to those who deny God’s existence.**
 - You can deny that there’s anything beyond physical bread, physical birth, physical water: that there’s no spirit/soul, bread of life, living water, eternal life.

- You can go to **Sartre**, Hitchens, Dennet, etc., but you will find the words of eternal life there. **That's a hopeless life to me.**
- **Go to those who deny God's sovereignty.**
 - You can become an open theist if you don't like Jesus' claims about divine sovereignty, and hold that God doesn't really know the future.
 - That's hopeless to me.
 - **I know if it were up to me, I would not come to Christ.**
- **Go to those who proclaim a different god/gods.**
 - You can go to Muhammad or Buddha, but I don't believe you will **find the words of eternal life there either.**
- **Go to those who say that there's no such thing as sin, or that sin is not a big deal.**
 - Many reject what Jesus says in **chapter 8**: that sin is enslaving.
 - Many of these individuals hold a view that says on the last day God will in effect say, **"Oh, you all come on in."**
 - **There is no need for a Savior, for atonement, for the cross in such a system.**
 - **There is no freedom in that message.**
 - **There is no justice in that message, for things must be set right.**
 - **There is no true mercy and grace in that message.**
 - **The words of eternal life are not present in such a message.**
- **Go to those who offer works based salvation.**
 - We visited a particular church last week that offers people the "holy steps" – The Church of Holy Stairs (Scala Sancta) where many Catholic relics are located. These stairs were supposedly brought from Jerusalem and were the steps Jesus walked on during his passion.
 - By praying up the steps, many believe that "you can receive total atonement," if you pray there on certain times a year.
 - **It was so sad to me.** It brought Kimberly to tears.
 - While many may not hold this view, millions espouse a works based system of salvation – you can go to heave by being good, or at least better than others.
 - They have their own steps.
 - But Jesus would never have to die if that were the case.
 - We are saved because he ascended to the cross on our behalf.
 - It's Jesus + nothing.
 - **That's where hope is. Jesus already did the work for us!**

Consider your options: (1) deny God's existence, (2) deny God's sovereignty, (3) opt for a different god, (4) minimize sin and become a universalist, or (5) embrace a works based righteousness.

My friends, there is no alternative to Jesus.

He's not one option among many – **he's the only option!**

2. A true disciple abides in Jesus' life-giving Word.

- Peter picks up on the previous discourse, about Jesus' words being spirit and life, and confesses that Jesus has the words of eternal life.
- **Harry Potter – I learned that many of her characters names were taken from a particular graveyard in Edinburgh, where she wrote it just a few steps away. She brought these characters to life with her words.**
- Well, that's fantasy, but Jesus' words really do bring the dead to life.
- We believe that this is how we grow, through the living and abiding word of God.

3. A true disciple exalts Jesus as the Messiah.

- The Holy One of God is a Messianic confession. (Mk 1:24).
- It's a similar confession in the OT to the Holy One of Israel, who redeems and defends his people (41:14; 43:14-15). "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King" (43:15)
- And it recalls the Messianic statements in Psalms, such as Psalm 16:10.
- Notice its **knowledge and faith.**
- **Some think faith only exists for those who want to forgo knowledge.**
- Peter's faith is rooted in what he knows about Jesus.
- Notice also the "**we**" – Peter speaks on their behalf. A corporate confession.
- **Soon they will preach it – Acts 2:27**

70a: This again is a result of divine grace. "I chose you."

- This is like the confession in Matt 16, where Jesus says, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you but my Father in heaven."
- **People who confess Jesus rightly understand the grace that has enabled them to do so – and it makes them humble, not haughty.**

70b: "One of you is a devil." — Jesus identifies the source of Judas' betrayal: **the devil.**

- **There is warfare involved in your decision about Jesus.**

71: A chilling statement. The phrase, "one of the twelve" has an ominous note to it, emphasizing the evil of one of Jesus' inner circle betraying him.

We end, then, with a picture of a false disciple: Judas.

So **two types of false disciples:**

- Type 1: You can consider Christ's claims and his cross, and **walk away** (v. 66).
- Type 2: You can consider Christ's claims and his cross, and **fake it** (v. 77).

Or you can stand with Peter and make v. 68 your confession.

