

Eat the Bread

John 6

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 15, 2018

Well, I would like to go ahead and begin our sermon for today. The last couple of weeks, we've been covering some administrative things on the front end. But we have a lot to cover today. So, if you would go ahead and open your Bibles with me to the Gospel of John, and we'll get started. If you would, go ahead and open to the Gospel of John. And as you're doing that, there are a lot of ideas out there today about how the Church of Jesus Christ should grow.

In our day and age, Christian leaders are obsessed with finding new ways to get their pews filled and their membership rows to skyrocket, and their numbers to go up. It's a very big topic today in Christian circles; how to do this, how to grow the church.

Just to mention a few of the ideas that are out there (some of you might be familiar with these), but here are some of the latest church growth strategies that we find among us. The first is to give people what they want. To find out what they would like in a church and give it to them. Let the visitors lead the church.

Concerning this method of church growth, one author says this, he says, "I believe that the responsibility in this age is to positivize religion. I talk a great deal to groups that are not positive and try to change them from what we would call fundamentalists who deal constantly with words like sin, salvation, repentance, and guilt, that sort of thing, to groups that do not talk about those subjects."

At another time, he said, "I don't think there's anything that has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality than the often crude, uncouth and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition."

I just want to say that's our goal as a church, is to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition. But in the words of this author, the church is supposed to make people feel welcome and good and happy, and not sinful and broken over their sin.

The way this strategy works, it's pretty simple: you go into a neighborhood, take a survey, and ask people what they would like to see in a church, and then you give it to them. So, if they would like an indoor basketball court, you give them an indoor basketball court - nothing wrong with that. But that's the strategy though. If they want a coffee shop next to the sanctuary, you put a coffee shop next to the sanctuary. If they want a Saturday night rock 'n' roll concert, you give them that. But whatever you do, cater everything to the guests. Lead them that way. Give them what they want.

That's one way to grow the church that's out there today. It's called the seeker-sensitive model. But I don't think that's a good name for it, because we should all be sensitive to seekers. I think a better name for it could be a seeker-driven church; the seekers drive the agenda.

It leads to another way, a church growth strategy that's popular today, and that is to try and become like the lost. That is to try and become like lost people. As the thinking goes, if you want to grow your church, you need to look like those who are unbelievers, dress like they dress, talk like they talk, and watch what they watch. And that's how you draw them in, that's how you get them to come.

One classic example of this, is the one adopted by a pastor from Seattle called the Cursing Pastor. That was what he was called because he said a lot of good Biblical truth from the pulpit along with a lot of curse words. He's not in Seattle anymore, but I think he's calmed down from this. But in one of his books, he talks about his approach to ministry this way, he says, "In the beginning of my ministry, I had grown facial hair and started cursing again." He said, "I stopped for about 15 minutes after I got saved and briefly considered doing other things. But I could not ..." He mentioned smoking. He said, "I briefly considered taking up smoking but I had asthma, which kept me from my cool potential."

Why does he do that? Why curse in church? Because lost people do that. That's how you draw them in. They do that, so he does that. They act that way, so he acts that way. You dress and look like the goats in order to turn them into sheep.

Which leads to another church growth strategy that's popular today (and this is all leading to our passage for this morning) but that is: to entertain people. As the thinking goes, if you want to grow your church ... well, churches have gotten a nasty reputation for being boring, for preaching long dry sermons, so why not spice it up a little bit? Make church fun instead of boring. This one is usually pretty subtle, but it's been taken to extremes.

So, for instance on May 13th, 1991, the Wall Street Journal ran an article entitled *Mighty Fortress: Megachurches Strive to Be All Things to Their People*. In which they told about one church's attempt to entertain people by holding a wrestling match between the staff. They brought in a wrestler named Tugboat Taylor to teach the pastoral staff how to pull hair, kick shins, and toss bodies around without doing any real harm.

I think I would win that here at Grace Fellowship because I'm the only pastor on staff. But why did they do that? Well, that's to draw people in. To entertain them. People don't want to talk about serious things, so talk about trivial things. People don't want to talk about deep things of the faith, so talk about things that don't matter; entertain them.

We could talk about other church growth strategies, I'm not mentioning all that to beat up on anybody, but just to raise this question, how does the Church of Jesus Christ grow? Do you ever wonder that? How does the church grow? How do we draw people in? How do we reach the world for Christ? That's an important question, isn't it? Especially for us. We're two years into this. We're a very young church. We're three years into this, and we want to grow. We want to see new faces, we want to see new families, new people coming to know the Lord. We want to see new people getting disciplined. So, how do we do that?

Let me ask this another way, how did Jesus grow His church? If you think about it, when the Lord started, there was no church, right? There was no more unchurched community than the first century in Israel when Jesus started. There was no church. And by a few centuries later,

there were churches everywhere, it exploded, the Gospel went all over the place. How did He do that?

Did Jesus give people what they wanted? Did He go around Galilee handing out surveys to find out what people would like to see in a church? Did He look like unbelievers in Jerusalem? Did He try to dress like the Pharisees and talk like the tax collectors in order to win them over? Did He entertain the crowds that followed Him? Did Jesus do wrestling matches? How did He grow His church?

That's an important question to ask because our passage for this morning answers that, if you want to look in John chapter 6. If you're joining us for the first time today, we're in the middle of the series in the Gospel of John called the "That You May Believe" series. Because John says he wrote this book so that you may believe.

In fact, the end of the book says in chapter 20:31 that, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name." John says, "There was more I could have written, there was more I could have put in this book, but these things have been written so that you may believe Jesus is the Christ and be saved."

This morning, we're going to look at how that plays out in the area of the church, especially church growth. How did Jesus grow His church? What example did He leave behind for us to follow? And there's a lot of ways we could answer that question this morning. So, for example, if you've been with us the past couple weeks, you'll know Jesus was compassionate with lost people. That was one way He grew His church. He was a very compassionate Saviour.

In John 4, we saw, you remember the woman at the well? He talked to a woman nobody wanted to talk to, because He was compassionate to her. In John 5, He healed a man nobody wanted to heal; showing His compassion, His mercy. He was also patient with people - that was another way Jesus grew the church. In John 3, He met with a guy named Nicodemus at night. Supposedly late at night because Nicodemus didn't want to be seen. And Jesus gave him that time because He was patient with him.

That leads to another way Jesus grew His church in John 6, and that is to tell people the truth. Jesus told people what it would cost to follow Him. He told them what they would have to give up if they wanted to be His disciples. And let's look at this passage together, it's a very interesting one, I think. If you want to look in the first couple of verses of John 6 just to give you some of the background for what the Lord does here.

Chapter 6:1 of the Gospel of John says,

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).
2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 And then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

Now verse 1 starts off by saying, "After these things." Which is the same phrase that John uses at

the beginning of chapters 5, 7, and 21. That's kind of his marking of time. It refers to an indefinite period of time. In other words, we don't know how much time has passed since John chapter 5 and John chapter 6. It was just "after these things". But we know something about the timing of this. Because if you notice in verse 4 it says that, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near."

That's important, because it actually tells us quite a bit. This event in John 6 is called The Feeding of the 5,000. How many of you guys have heard the story of The Feeding of the 5,000? Just everybody, right? Pretty much. You guys do the flannel graphs? Remember the flannel graphs video? No? Okay, good, good, good. All right, you're tracking with me.

If you've ever read John 6 before, you'll know it tells a story of how Jesus took the launch of a little boy and He fed thousands of people with it. Now, let me show you how the Passover ties into this. John 6:10 if you notice, says that there were 5,000 men at this event. It doesn't count the women and children. That was a normal thing in the first century. That's just how they did things. But if they were all going to the Passover feast, if these 5,000 men were going to the Passover like it says they were, the number would have gone up tremendously. Because the Passover was a family event in Israel.

If you went to the Passover, you brought your wives and kids with you. They would all be part of the sacrificing of the lamb in Jerusalem. So that if there were 5,000 men at this event, some scholars have estimated there could have been 15 to 20,000 men, women and children. Meaning this crowd was ginormous in John 6. As a matter of fact, the Greek word in verse 2 that says "a large crowd followed Him", that phrase could mean "a mob of people". It could be translated almost like "a riot," "an unruly mass".

Also, if you notice in your bulletins...did you guys get the timeline in your bulletins of the life of Christ? I forgot to actually grab a bulletin. But do you guys have that in your bulletins there? The history of the life of Christ? If you notice that, there is a large block of time between John 5 and John 6. The Gospel of John is on the right-hand column there. If you notice, there's a large gap of time between John 5 and John 6, because although the feast in John 5 is not mentioned ... if you remember from last week, it says Jesus went to a feast of the Jews. It doesn't tell us what feast it was, but we do know that when He went to Jerusalem in John 5, nobody knew who He was. Do you remember that? Jewish leaders, they don't know who Jesus was. The guy He healed, he didn't know who Jesus was. Nobody knew Him.

In John 6, you're seeing a totally different scenario. Now, everybody knows who Jesus was. To the point that He's got 20,000 people following Him. And the point is, there must have been a large amount of time between those two events. How much we don't know, but some amount of time. In other words, this is the height of Jesus' success as far as numbers go. This is the height of what we would call His Church Growth Movement in His day.

You can add that Jesus will be crucified at the next Passover feast. So, this is the last year of His life. This is starting the last year of His life. Oh, by the way, you'll want to keep those timelines in your Bibles. We'll refer to those in this series in John.

But going back to the passage, if you notice, verse 1 gives us the location of this miracle as well.

So, we have the timing of it. It's a long time after chapter 5. The location, it says, "After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee." That's the first time we hear about the Sea of Galilee in John's Gospel. It's the largest body of fresh water in Israel. The Dead Sea that's close by is bigger than the Sea of Galilee, but it's salt water. This is the largest body of fresh water in Israel. It was located in the middle part of Galilee about 120 kilometers north of Jerusalem.

The interesting thing about that here in John 6, is it was the site of many of Jesus' miracles which explains the large crowd that was there. About one third of Jesus' miracles occurred in or around the Sea of Galilee. So, you remember when He stops a storm? He's out on the water, He stops a storm? That was the Sea of Galilee. As we'll see in a minute, He walks on the Sea of Galilee here in a moment. And these people saw a lot of those miracles because verse 2 says, "A large crowd followed Him because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick."

In other words, these people didn't follow Him because of His teaching, they followed Him because of His signs, His miracles. He put on a show for them, and they liked that. He was doing amazing things, and that's why they were hanging around Jesus here.

We could also mention (this is helpful), most of Jesus' disciples came from towns around the Sea of Galilee. In fact, the population of those towns was around 15 or 20,000 people. That was the average size of a town around the Sea at that time. So, Jesus has a town's worth of people following Him here, and the disciples are hometown heroes. They're the talk of the town because they're leading this crowd. They're at the front of all this.

Just to speed things up a little bit here, as Jesus is teaching and ministering to these people, He says to Philip in verse 5, "Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?" They didn't have Save-On-Foods around the Sea of Galilee or Tim Horton's. And so, Philip says, he says, "200 denarii" or "200 days worth of wages is not sufficient for them."

So, in verse 9, if you just follow in the text as I talk about this, Andrew brings a little boy to Jesus and says, "He has five barley loaves." That was the kind of loaves you would feed to cattle. They were very coarse grainy bread. And he has two fish. The word for fish there is *osparion* which means "little fish" or it could translate "fish sauce".

Most of the pictures I've seen of Jesus feeding the 5,000, it's the bread and then just huge things of fish, right? Like I don't know, Halibut or whatever the large fish are around here - just huge fish. These were like sardines, and he only has two of them. In other words, this isn't a lot of food. This is very, very little amount of food here.

The passage goes on to tell us in verses 11-14, that Jesus has everyone sit down and He feeds them all. He feeds 15 to 20,000 people with five loaves of bread and some fish sauce. It's an incredible miracle. As a matter of fact, this is the only miracle aside from the resurrection that all four Gospels talk about, because of the size of it. It was enormous.

Verse 12 says that these people were filled because of this miracle. Which is important because poor people back then, peasants were hardly ever filled. There wasn't enough food. We're filled three times a day (some of us four or five times a day); they were never full back then.

Verse 13 says there were 12 basketfuls. That word for “basket” means like a basket you would carry with you on a journey; suitcases. 12 suitcases full of fragments. In other words, there was more food left over than they started out with. Something like 12 times as much. And in response to that, the people said, “This is truly the Prophet who has come into the world.” And verse 15 says, “So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.”

In other words, they said, “If He can feed us, He can lead us. If He can fill our bellies, He can have our hearts. Let's make Him king by force” And Jesus says, “I didn't come for that. I didn't come to be that kind of king. I didn't come to entertain you, I didn't come to meet your felt needs. I came to be your Lord. You're not interested in that.” And so, He goes away to one of the mountains around the Sea of Galilee.

If you think for a moment about the disciples' reaction to this, this would be devastating on them. I mean they're at the front of a movement that in their minds could take over the world, right? And they would be at the front of it. They're leading thousands of people (probably a lot of those people they knew from their own towns) and Jesus does this. He just abandons it. They're excited, they're encouraged, they're well-fed, they want to make Jesus King, and He turns it down.

Just to go quickly through this, because our focus is on the end, but that night to encourage the disciples and show them that He is still the Messiah, Jesus walks on water. That's in verses 15 through 21. He didn't do that for the crowds, He didn't do that for the 20,000 people (He could have done that). But verses 15 through 21 say He does it for the disciples to show them that He is still the King, the King of Galilee, the King of the world, and so they'll still follow Him.

The next day, a small crowd from the previous day follows Jesus to a synagogue in Capernaum because they want more bread. And this is the conversation I want us to focus on this morning. If you want to look, we've already read some of this of this, Jim read some of this a moment ago. But if you look in verses 26 through 27, the setting is that these people come from that crowd of 20,000. They row across the Sea of Galilee into Capernaum, probably a five-mile journey or so. It shows you how scarce food was back then by the way - that they would travel five miles to get some more bread.

They find Jesus in a synagogue and here's how the conversation goes, just a little taste of it. Versus 26 through 27, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life.’”

I mean if you look in verses 53 through 56, this is just another sampling of this conversation. So, Jesus said to them, He says,

53 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

Now, that is a very, very interesting thing. I mean this whole chapter is interesting to me. That's a very interesting thing to say because you couldn't think of anything more offensive to say to a Jew than that: "You have to drink blood to go to Heaven; My blood, the Messiah's blood." You couldn't think of anything more bizarre to say in a synagogue in a town like Capernaum. Capernaum was a very well-respected city. Because drinking and eating blood was strictly forbidden for the Jewish people. Leviticus 17 says, "Any Israelite or any alien living among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood and I will cut him off from his people."

You could eat flesh if you were a Jew, but you were not allowed under any circumstances whatsoever to drink blood. God would cut you off, He would excommunicate you from His people if you did that.

With that in mind, Jesus tells this crowd, "You came to Me looking for more bread but I'm telling you that if you want eternal life, you're going to have to eat My flesh and drink My blood. You're going to have to excommunicate yourself from your former way of life. You're going to have to cut yourself off from the way you used to be. You can't just ask for a handout. You can't just ask for a free meal, it takes more than that to be my disciple. You have to come to Me as Lord."

Eating and drinking here is a reference to believing in Jesus. We're going to see this a little bit next week when He calls Himself the water of life. But you believe in Jesus when your soul eats Him like bread and consumes Him like a drink. When you make Him part of you, when you take Him in on the inside. "That's how you're saved," Jesus says. "That's how you go to heaven."

This reference to eating and drinking blood was also given as a shock to these people, because they didn't get it. And Jesus had already turned them down once when they tried to make Him king, and now He has to do it again because they're coming for the wrong reasons. They just wanted a full belly, they didn't want Him to rule their life. So, Jesus has to say something like this to get the point across. He's not promoting cannibalism. A man who taught the things Jesus taught would never do that. There's a deeper meaning here.

This is important. Let Me say it this way, because this is important. For Jesus, church growth was going to happen through one method and one method only. And it wasn't going to be by giving people what they wanted. And it wasn't going to be by becoming like the lost and looking like them and dressing like them, and it wasn't going to be by entertaining people, it was going to be by telling them the truth.

Jesus grew His church by telling people the truth. He says, "There's only one Saviour for sin, and it's Me. There's only one way to heaven, and it's Me, and you don't come to Me asking for bread. You don't come to Me asking for a handout, and that's it. You come to Me asking for forgiveness. You come to Me asking for salvation. You come to Me and bow your head to Me as Lord."

Listen friends, we need to be compassionate to the lost, and we need to be patient like Jesus was. There's so much we can learn from His example, there's so much He can teach us. But here we learn that we have to tell people the truth. It means nothing if you don't tell them the truth. If you

don't tell them who Jesus is and what He demands of His disciples - and that's what we're going to look at this morning.

In fact, you're going to see at the end of this passage that many of the disciples leave Jesus at the end of this, and they never come back. They leave as a result of this teaching, it's too much for them. And Jesus, you're going to find out, He doesn't chase after them. He just lets them go.

Let's talk about that this morning. If you're taking notes, in John 6:60-66, we're going to see five reasons why the disciples leave Jesus. I appreciate your patience with me setting all that background, because I think that's important for what we're going to see at the end of this. But here's five reasons why the disciples leave Jesus. If you come tonight to the Harrison Hot Springs for the picnic, you're going to hear three reasons why they stay with Him. So, I'm giving you the bad news this morning. Come back this afternoon, you'll hear the good news, okay? This is why they leave, this afternoon you'll hear why they stay with Jesus.

But here's five reasons why they believe. This is an unusual church growth strategy, amen? They're very strange. I mean if I had 20,000 people following me, we would set up a mega-synagogue on the Sea of Galilee, right? I mean we would build a building and put up the stuff and all that kind of stuff. He offends them all. That's what He does. And let's talk about that, let's see what He's doing. Why does the Lord do this? What is He thinking?

The first reason they leave is this; they leave because His teaching is difficult. It's actually what the passage says. They leave our Lord because His teaching is difficult. If you read verse 60 (we could even start in verse 59), it says, "These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. And therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?'"

There are several places in the Gospel of John where the word "disciple" refers to more than just the 12 disciples, and this is one of them. I think a lot of times, we think when Jesus was going along with the disciples, just you know, a handful of people and that was the extent of it. But that referred to more than that. The 12 were Jesus' closest disciples, but there were others. And this refers to some of them. Many of these guys were called His disciples. And when you come to verse 60, a lot of them were saying, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

Now, whether the 12 were saying this or not, we don't know, but many other disciples were. And the word for difficult in Greek is *skelo*. It means "dry" or "rough". And it can also mean "scaly". You can hear the word "scaly" in the word "skelo" like the scales on a fish. Nobody pets a fish, right? Very uncomfortable things to pet. That's the idea - it's hard to touch.

They thought this statement from Jesus was hard to touch. The word for it in Greek, "who can listen to *it*" could be translated "Him". So, verse 60 could read, "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a scaly statement; who can listen to Him?'" "Who's going to put up with this?" They asked. "Who's going to believe in a guy who says you have to eat His flesh and drink His blood to go to heaven? That's difficult, that's hard to swallow."

They're preparing to leave Jesus because His teaching is rough. And I would say millions of churchgoers today leave Jesus for that reason. Because His teaching is rough, it's dry to them. They come to Him because they want something from Him, and when they don't get it, they

leave. They want their needs met, they want a little more bread. When He doesn't give that, they leave. Or they want to be entertained, they want church to be fun, and when it's not fun, they say, "That's too rough. That's too *skelo* - scaly."

John MacArthur says, talking about this crowd of people and relating it to today, he says, "This kind of people have no problem viewing Jesus as a baby in the manger at Christmas or as a social reformer with a broad message of love and tolerance, and as the ideal human being everyone should emulate or a source of wealth and worldly happiness. But they are unwilling to embrace the Biblical Jesus - the God-Man who fearlessly rebukes sinners and warn them of eternal hell, and that salvation from that hell comes only through believing in His words."

He's right. People like a warm and fuzzy Jesus but they can't stand a harsh one. They love a sweet little baby in a manger, but they don't want a God-Man who talks like a God-Man and acts like a God-Man and makes demands like a God-Man. That's who Jesus was. There were times when the Lord was so compassionate, it blows your socks off, right? Have you guys seen that? The last couple of chapters in the Gospel of John? He talks to people that you and I would never talk to. And he heals a guy you would never heal. And yet, there's times when His teaching was just difficult.

Let me just read a few of the difficult things Jesus said in the New Testament. You can just write these down, don't turn here. But in Matthew 10:22, Jesus said, "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." I would say that's a difficult statement, would you say that? "You will be hated by all because of My name." Boy, I can't wait for that to come true. This sounds terrible.

Matthew 10:34-36, He said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Luke 14:33 quotes Him as saying, "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his possessions." It's just one scaly statement after another. In John 15:20, He said, "Remember the words I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."

I mean that's unpleasant stuff, and it all came from the mouth of Jesus. You cannot separate the unpleasant Jesus from the pleasant Jesus. Listen, you read the Bible, Jesus is very pleasant at times, right? He really is. He's wonderful - God of love, Prince of Peace. And there's other times when He's unpleasant. And you can't separate them. You can't separate the sweet little baby in a manger from the God-Man. John 6 is one of those unpleasant teachings that come from His mouth. And this crowd of disciples picks up on that, and they say, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to this? We can't, we don't want to have anything to do with this."

Which leads to a second reason why these disciples leave Jesus. They leave because they were offended. Just to put it in plain words, they leave because His teaching is hard, and they leave because they were offended. If you look in verse 61, it goes on and says, "But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble?'"

We didn't have time to get into this, but in verse 41, the Jews, or the leaders of the synagogue in Capernaum, are grumbling about Jesus. And in verse 61, Jesus' disciples are grumbling about Him. He makes the leaders of the synagogue upset, and now He upsets some of His disciples.

And if you notice, they don't grumble out loud, they grumble quietly to themselves. But Jesus being the Son of God knew what was in their hearts. Matthew Henry says, "Thoughts were words to Christ." And so, He asked them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" Some of your translations say, "Does this offend you?"

That word for "stumble" there, is another interesting word in this passage. *Skandalizo* from which we get our English word "scandal". "Does this scandalize you?" Jesus says. "Does this surprise you like a scandal would?"

In First Corinthians 1:23, Paul says the Gospel is a stumbling block, a *skandalizo* to the Jews, because they trip and fall over it. And that's the idea of this word in John 6. In John 6, Jesus asked these men if His words are so shocking to them that they would keep them from following Him. He says, "You guys claim to be My disciples, but is this where you leave Me? Is this where the relationship ends?" They're offended at this.

I think as Christians, I don't know about you guys, but I often forget how offensive the Gospel can be to a nonbeliever. As a matter of fact, I was talking with a pastor, a friend of mine several years ago, who said that most Christians today just don't want to offend anybody - they're cowards. They're too afraid that people won't like them, so they don't say anything that would ever offend anybody.

I heard another pastor say that many of the pulpits in the US (and maybe this applies here) are full of mild-mannered men telling mild-mannered people to be more mild-mannered. It's true. I mean when was the last time you visited a church where the sermon just really got at you in a good way, in a convicting way? You went home just licking your wounds. You guys know what I'm talking about? You go home, head in your hands, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." When was the last time you read a Christian book like that? And you had to put it down because it convicted you so horribly?

I had a friend in seminary tell me ... he was reading a book and he's like, "I just had to put that thing down and go in a corner and weep." We Christians sometimes are about as offensive as a teddy bear. We're about as dangerous as a marshmallow.

What was Jesus like? There were times when He created a scandal. That's what this word means. Listen, people didn't crucify Jesus because He told everyone to be nice to each other, and to be mild-mannered. You don't crucify a man for that. They crucified Him because He said things like this. Because they were offended. They weren't offended at His behaviour; His behaviour was very kind. They were offended at His words - a stumbling block. Adrian Rogers once said that, "The problem with today's preachers is that no one wants to kill them anymore." You can't say that about Jesus. They killed Him for this reason.

I've told you before about by my professor who was talking to a neighbour about his need to come to Christ, to have his sins forgiven. And the man kept saying, "I can't come to Jesus now. I can't believe today." So, my professor finally said to him, "Well, do me a favour then, don't die. If you die, you will go to hell. If you die, you will face the judgment of God. So, do me a favour and from the time I come back, don't die." That's offensive to people. That's a scandalous thing today to say to somebody, but it's true. And that's how people are saved. They have to believe

that, turn to Christ, and be saved. And that's exactly what's going on here.

It leads to a third reason the disciples leave Jesus. They leave because they're of the flesh. They leave because they're of the flesh. His teaching is hard, it offends them, and they leave because they're of the flesh. If you read all of verses 61 through 63, it says,

61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled that this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? 62 What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I've spoken to you are spirit and they're life."

In the progression of the text here, Jesus tells these men that they must believe in Him if they're to be saved. They have to eat His flesh and drink His blood. And they're offended by that. It's scandalous to them. So, He calls them out on it and He says, "I tell you if you're offended by that, if you're offended by Me saying that you must eat My flesh and drink My blood, what are you going to think when I ascend into heaven? What are you going to think when you see Me crucified and resurrected and going back to where I was before?"

These men wanted to be Jesus' disciples, they wanted to be His followers. Jesus tells them bluntly, "If you can't follow Me now, you won't follow Me then. If you can't follow Me when I tell you how great I am, you won't follow Me when I go back to the Father." The ascension Jesus is referring to here is mentioned in Acts 1 where it says, "He was taken up before the disciples' eyes and a cloud hid Him from their sight."

You know, after Jesus was crucified and resurrected, He spent some time teaching His disciples (the ones who stayed with Him). And after that period of time, He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father until it was time for Him to return. And Jesus brings that up here to tell this crowd, "If you can't follow Me now, you won't follow Me then."

Then He says something interesting in verse 63. He says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words I've spoken to you are spirit and they are life." That phrase "the flesh profits nothing" has two negative words in it in Greek. So, it could be translated, "The flesh doesn't do you no good." If you have English Standard Version, it says, "It's no help at all." "It accounts for nothing," in NIV. The flesh is worthless.

These guys are coming to Him because they want fleshly things. They want a full belly, which we would say is not a bad motive. Jesus says here that that is a bad motive to come to Him for, if that's all you're coming to Him for. You know, they come to Him because they want to see His miracles, they want to see Him do amazing things. It's all about the flesh to them. So many people come to church today for the same reason. In fact, if you remember in verse 26 which we read a moment ago, Jesus says, "Truly, truly I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw signs but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." Jesus says, "You're coming to Me for fleshly things - don't come to Me for that."

It leads to another reason why they leave Jesus. I'm going through these quickly because I want to get to the end here. They leave because they don't believe in Him. They leave because His teaching is difficult, they leave because they are offended, they leave because they are of the flesh, and the disciples leave because they don't believe in Him.

If you read in verse 64, that's what Jesus says. He says, "But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." These men were confused and they were offended and they were fleshly because at the end of the day, they didn't believe. They weren't true disciples.

The reason Jesus doesn't say, "But there are none of you who believe," is because His true disciples did believe in Him. Peter was in this crowd, and if you look in verses 68 through 69, Peter later says to Him in verse 68, "Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'" So, there were disciples in this group that believed. But the ones who didn't left.

I knew a Christian in college named Lincoln who thought a lot like this crowd did before he came to faith in Christ. He was an engineering student and he thought like an engineer; very mathematical, very precise. It was really interesting to see him wrestle with the Bible. He had an interesting method of doing this. When I first met him in college, he was lost and he began to attend one of our Bible studies. And he would come to the leaders of the study with questions about things he was reading in the Bible, but he couldn't remember where they were. So, he started writing them out on a post-it note and sticking them in the pages.

You know, he'd read the Gospel of John. He'd come to something like, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." And Lincoln would say, "What does that mean?" And he would write it on a post-it note and stick it in his Bible, so that when he could find somebody who would help him answer the question.

But I remember him saying over and over and over again, "I can't believe because I can't understand. I can't believe because I can't understand. I don't understand how Jesus can be fully God and fully man, so how can I believe it?" He said, "I don't understand how God could die for my sins. I don't understand how a sinner like me could go to heaven." He would say that stuff all the time. I finally told him, "Lincoln, there are some things you don't understand until you believe. There are some things you believe and understanding comes later. You believe what you understand, you believe what is true and you leave the mysteries up to God." And Lincoln eventually did that and gave his life to Christ.

But here in John 6, these guys are struggling with this. They don't really believe in Jesus. They believe He's a miracle worker, they believe He gives free food, but that's where it stops. They don't believe He's the one who will die for sins, they don't believe He's the Son of God. And when Jesus says He is, they say, "That's too much, we don't like that."

Verse 64, if you notice, it ends by saying, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." That's a reference to Judas there. If you come back this afternoon to Harrison Hot Springs, we're going to talk about this. But one of the most interesting things in this passage is that when all the thousands of people leave Jesus, Judas stays behind. It's fascinating. He didn't believe. Not only did he not believe, he had evil reasons for being there. And we're going to say more about that this afternoon, but verse 64 refers to that.

For the sake of time right now, let me give you a fifth reason why many of the disciples leave

Jesus in John 6. Here's a fifth and a final reason why they leave. They leave because the Father has not granted it to them. They leave because the Father has not granted it to them.

If you look in verse 65, that's what it says. It says, "And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted Him from the Father.'" "Has been granted" is a translation of the word *didómi* in Greek which means "gives". So, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been given Him from the Father."

The reference to "for this reason I have said to you" is actually a reference to something Jesus said in verse 44 earlier. Verse 44, he had said to this crowd in the synagogue, he said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." So, no one can come unless the Father draws him in verse 44, and no one can come unless the Father grants it to Him in verse 65. Those are two ways of saying the same thing.

But these men don't believe, and they're offended, and they're fleshly because the Father has not enabled them to believe. They're still dead in their sins. All men are born spiritually dead to God and in order for us to live, God has to raise us from the dead. He has to give our souls life. Salvation is not God plus man, it is God plus nothing. He does it all. But for some men, God doesn't do that. We don't know why, that's a mystery that's never given to us in Scripture.

But Jesus says here, he says, "For this reason I've said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted Him from the Father." He says, "I know the Father has not enabled you to believe because you don't believe." It's as simple as that. I know He's not drawing you to Me because you're not coming to Me. You're being pushed farther away. Your lives show where your hearts are." I mean if God is saving you, you come to Jesus - these men are not coming to Jesus.

Now, I want to get to the end. So, let me sum this up for you. Five reasons why the disciples leave Jesus here. If you've been taking notes, five reasons why they go away: they leave because His teaching is hard, they leave because they are offended at Him, they leave because they are of the flesh, because they don't believe, and because the Father has not granted it to them.

Now, we've been talking about them leaving, so we haven't seen it happen. So, let's do that now. If you look in verse 66, here's a sum of this whole thing. Here's the conclusion of the matter. It says, "As a result of this [these five reasons] many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." They didn't like His teaching, they were offended at Him, they were fleshly and unbelieving, and the Father had not granted them the gift of faith, so they left. They left.

"As a result of this", that phrase shows that there was a specific reason for this. It's because of this specific teaching at this specific time that these disciples leave Jesus. He said this and it pushed them over the edge. He said this and the whole relationship snapped in two. "They withdrew" meaning they stopped following Him. Some of your translations say "they turned back," they turned around and went the other way.

That phrase "following Jesus" is kind of interesting, because in one way it's symbolic, in another way it's actually literal. If you wanted to follow a traveling preacher back then, you had to

literally go where he went, right? There was no internet, there was no radio, no books. So, if you wanted to follow Jesus, you literally had to go wherever He went around Israel.

These men, it says turned around and stopped doing that. They packed up their bags and they went home. As a matter of fact, verse 67 makes a reference to the 12 disciples (and again, we'll get into that later this afternoon) that stayed with Jesus implying that everyone else left but the 12. Jesus' words and the way He handled this situation was so shocking to these people that He was left with only 12 men. He had 15,000 people the day before and now he has 12. How's that for a church growth strategy? I mean how's that for building the Kingdom?

Let me ask you this, how many churches would hire a man who had this on his resume? He dropped it down by was it, 1000% overnight? How many conferences would ask this guy to come speak?

But I want you to notice what you don't read in verse 67. Again, this is one of the fascinating things about this. You don't read in verse 67 that Jesus ran after these disciples and said to them, "I'm sorry I offended you, will you please forgive me?" We don't read that it says Jesus said, "I know why you're leaving, it's because I didn't give you bread. Here's some bread, please stay." He doesn't say, "I know why you're leaving, it's because I'm too negative. Let Me be positive towards you."

Jesus didn't give these men what they wanted. He didn't try to become like one of them. He didn't entertain them, He just told them the truth, and He let them go. This is a method for church growth that I think most people would find completely bizarre. How do you grow a church like this? By making people mad at you? But that's what He does here.

Now, listen, Jesus loved people and He had compassion on them, and He was patient toward them. You read that over and over and over again in the Gospel. So, that needs to be balanced with this. But He also told people the truth. And we have to do the same thing today. If we call ourselves Christians, we have to follow our Saviour.

Our job is not to make Jesus attractive and friendly, our job is to make Jesus known. We're ambassadors and ambassadors don't change the message. Jesus is the bread of life, He was broken and killed for our sins and those who believe that and accept His offense, will live in heaven, and those who don't, will go to hell. That's what this passage says, and Jesus doesn't change the message to make it more accommodating. We can't do that either.

Let me say it this way (because this is a good balance here), John Stott once said this, "Our love grows soft if it's not strengthened by truth, and our truth grows hard if it's not softened by love." Let me say that again because it's very helpful. He said, "Our love grows soft if it's not strengthened by truth, and our truth goes hard if it's not softened by love."

I mean I told you before about soft Christians, right? Like a marshmallow? They never offend anybody. But we all know plenty of hard ones too, right? You need to have both of those things: truth and love, if you want to grow the church the way Jesus did. They're the two pillars that keep the church off the ground. Truth and love are the two wings that keep the plane in the air. And you take one of them away and the airplane crashes. You swing too far away from truth or love, and it falls from the sky.

We don't change the message; the message stays the same. But we don't change the way we deal with people either, we do both like our Saviour did, and we leave the results in His hands. And as you do that, don't be surprised when you get different responses. Don't be surprised when some people like the message and some people don't. That's what happened with our Saviour 2,000 years ago. It's going to happen to us today. But if we're faithful, the Lord will bless that, and He'll bless His church in His time and for His glory.

We'll come back this afternoon to Harrison Hot Springs. We'll go talk about the rest of the story. Again, I laid some heavy stuff on you this morning. This is the bad news, come back this afternoon for the good news, okay? We'll talk about the disciples that did not walk away - the ones who stayed with the Lord. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer

Father, we read a story like this or a passage like this and in many ways, at least I tremble at some of this. We have a Saviour who was love incarnate and He was truth incarnate, and I don't think there's anybody in this room who doesn't fail in one of those areas. Father, we don't love people enough and we don't tell the truth enough. But we thank you for a Saviour that we can turn back to for forgiveness, and the Lord we can turn back to, to show us the right way to do this.

Father, we do want the church to grow for Your glory, but we want to do it in the way that pleases You. We thank You for this example of Your Son, who was relentless in His pursuit of truth and relentless in His pursuit of people. He was very patient with these men here and also very direct. Lord, help us to balance those things in our own life as a church.

Father, I do pray if there's any of you here this morning who have never taken of the bread of life, and they've never come to Christ for forgiveness, that this passage would awaken something in their hearts. That they would be saved Lord and You would draw them to Yourself.

For those here who are saved, I pray Father as we study the Gospel of John, it would remind us of the Saviour that we call our Lord. It would remind us of the kind of Man Jesus was; that we would imitate Him and we would come to Him for forgiveness and salvation.

Thank You for this time together Father. May You be glorified in it. We also pray Lord, You'll be glorified this afternoon as we come back together in Harrison Hot Springs. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.