

## Why People Leave Jesus

John 6:60-69

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 15, 2023

This week we are going to do something special as a church. We're going to spend one more week talking about a shepherding issue before we get back into the book of Hebrews. If you've been with us for a while, you'll know that we often do this in the month of January, because we take some time, or I take some time, to address a few issues that I wasn't able to get to during the year that are important for the health of our congregation. Last year was Bill C -4 and the subject of wearing a mask to church. That was some things we talked about in January. The year before that, it was the Christian and the government, and we wrestled with things related to that. Before that, I did some messages on the Bible Belt and what it's like being a believer in a in a very religious town, like we have here in Chilliwack. But this morning, I want to talk about the subject of hypocrisy, or spiritual deception because I think it's such an issue in the world that we live in today.

The Government of Canada took a poll last year, and they discovered that 50% of all Canadians profess to be Christian last year, can you gasp? Fifty percent. That means, one out of every two people you see on the street, is saved. Now, I don't think anybody would believe that. That many people certainly don't act like they're saved here in BC, because they're not; there's a deception there. They're confused about what a Christian is, and in order to talk about that, this morning, I want to open our Bibles one more time to the Gospel of John. That's the book we're in today. Again, we are going to be in Hebrews next week, and we'll be in Hebrews for the next little while. But I want to take one more look at John's gospel because it's been called the gospel of belief. John shows you what you need to do in order to be saved, and that is to believe in Christ. But you have to believe in the true Christ; you have to believe in the right one. Otherwise, it's useless. You can't just believe in a Jesus of your own imagination. I think it's safe to say that so many people do that today. That's why there's so many false professions of faith in our world. They just make Jesus up to be whatever they want Him to be. I have my Jesus, you have your Jesus; John was writing to prevent that sort of thing. That's the whole point of the book.

And he does it several different ways. For example, He gives you several important statements Jesus made about Himself in here; there's seven times when he quotes Christ as saying, "I am" something. He says, "I am the bread of life," and "I am the light of the world," and "I am the way, the truth and the life." And we've said before, that Jesus is not a way, but He's *the* way; and He's not a truth about God, He's *the* truth about God because He's the Son of God. He's in a totally different category from everyone else who ever lived. And John also gives you several conversations Jesus had with people to show you how He interacted with them, and talked to them face to face, so you could see what Christ was like on a personal level. So for instance, in the Gospel of John, He talks to people like Nicodemus, someone at the very height of Jewish society. And then He talks with a woman at the well, someone at the very bottom. He talks to Mary and Martha and the blind man in John 9. And one of the things John does, is he gives you several miracles to show you what Christ was like. As a person, He was compassionate. He couldn't

sit idly by and watch people suffer, which is why He healed the sick and raised the dead and made the blind to see. And in John chapter 6, He feeds the hungry.

So if you want to go there, this is our text for this morning. But in John 6, Jesus takes a group of famished Jews, and He gives them bread. And in fact, He gives them so much bread, that it overwhelmed them, because He filled their stomachs full of it. Just a little background about this story, the Gospel of Matthew tells us there were 5,000 men at this event, not counting women and children. But in John 6:4, it says that the Passover was near. And most scholars believe if that was the case, these men would have probably brought their families with them, bringing the size of the crowd to somewhere in the vicinity of 15,000 people. It was the size of a small town around the Sea of Galilee at this time; it was an absolutely staggering miracle. It blew their minds, which is why it's the only event mentioned in all four Gospels, aside from the crucifixion and the resurrection. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record this event because of the size of it. Because Jesus fed all those people starting with the lunch of a little boy.

And many of you know this story, you've heard it before, but if you look in your Bibles, John 6:8, says that when they realized the crowd was hungry, or when Jesus did, one of His disciples named Andrew found a little boy who had five loaves of bread and two fish. And that's what Jesus used for the miracle. Now the word fish here is the word *osparion* in Greek, which could be translated fish sauce. It referred to a small fish like a minnow that was caught in the Sea of Galilee and was often used to spread on your food in order to spice it up a little bit. In other words, this wasn't a trout; it was a small little thing. And the term for bread is *artos* in Greek, which refers to the coarse grainy bread that was used to feed cattle with after it had gotten old. Because this was a poor man's lunch. This little boy didn't have a lot of money, like everyone else around him. He just had a little bit to eat, and the passage says Jesus took what they brought Him, and He fed these people so much, they had 12 basketfuls leftover, which is 50 times more food than they started out with. And at the end of all this, this is what's most interesting I think about the story, is that at the end of the whole thing, you would think John would tell us that they all believed in Jesus, right? Remember, that's the theme of the Gospel of John. That's the whole point of the book; he's written so that you may believe. And you would think that when you come to the end of this event, they would all put their faith, and they would all be saved, and they would be Christians forevermore. And surprisingly, that's not what happens. If you look toward the end of the chapter, it tells us how a group of Jews from the original crowd meet Jesus a day afterwards, and they have a conversation with Him. And it goes like this, we're going to be more interested in the conversation than we are in the actual miracle, but if you look in verse 52, we're going to start there, we're just jumping in the conversation midstream. Here's what happens. It says,

Then the Jews began to argue with one another saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "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. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the

living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which has come down from heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.

These things He said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum. Therefore, many of His disciples when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

And then if you look down in verse 66, it says,

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and we're not walking with Him anymore.

Now, if you're wondering what this is all about, this whole conflict is because Jesus told them that in order to go to heaven, they have to eat His flesh and drink His blood way back in verse 53, which are references to believing in Him. When you trust in Christ, your soul consumes Him like food, and your heart draws Him in like a drink. But it's even more than that, because this statement was given for the intention of shocking these people because eating and drinking blood was forbidden to the Jews. Luke 17:10, says that the Lord will cut you off from your people if you do that. You could eat flesh if you were a Jew, but you were not allowed under any circumstances whatsoever to drink blood; that was forbidden. And with this in mind, Jesus tells these Jews in a synagogue, that you came looking to Me for bread, but I'm telling you, if you want eternal life, you're going to have to drink My blood. You're going to have to love Me and trust Me and depend on Me to the point that you live off Me like you live off bread. You're going to have to stop thinking that you're good enough to save yourself, you're going to have to give up the notion that you can earn eternal life by being Jewish, you can't, the only way for you to go to heaven is to do it through My sacrifice. For Christ, salvation was going to be through one thing and one thing only, and that was Him. They weren't going to be saved by the law. They weren't going to be saved by the commandments. They weren't going to be saved by being Abraham's child. It was going to come through the Messiah.

And this explains why the crowd responded like they did in verse 66. When it says that many of His disciples withdrew, and we're not walking from Him anymore. And that means they never walked with Jesus again after this. This is where everything came to a head. They drew a line in the sand, they put their foot down, and they said, "We can't take this anymore. This guy is too much," and they left. In fact, the way this is worded implies that everyone left Him but the twelve after this. If you think about that, In one day, 24 hours, Jesus goes from 15,000 followers to 12. That can be considered to be the worst disaster in church history. No church on the planet would hire a pastor who did this. If you put that on your resume, you'd be fired no matter where you went. And yet it all happened because listen, this is what Christ is like sometimes: He can be hard to follow. And this is the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ; He can rub people the wrong way. His preaching incited riots, He created political turmoil, He drove people away by the thousands like He did right here because He turned their whole world upside down. If you put yourself in the shoes of the disciples, you'd probably be thinking, "Jesus, you keep

doing this, there won't be anybody left. Jesus we're from Galilee. We know a lot of these people, could you knock it off a little bit?" He said, "No." These people plugged their ears and walked away because they couldn't handle them anymore.

The reason I bring that up is because this is not the way most people look at Jesus today, is it? It's very different from the modern concept of Christ, that a lot of us have bought into which paints Him out to be a nice guy who would never hurt a fly. He just walks around Israel telling people to love each other. I heard one commentator say, "Who would crucify a man who did that? Who just told people to be nice" The real reality is He was different from that. In fact, I believe this is the number one cause of hypocrisy in Canada right now in North America. And that is that so many people don't see Jesus like this. They think He's harmless. He never offends anybody. He just tells you what you want to hear, but the truth is that He doesn't. He calls for a decision. He tells you to repent. He says these are the terms that you can take it or leave it. This is what it means to follow Me; you have to drink My Blood. Do you want it or not? Because if you want it, I'll save you. And if you believe, He'll forgive, but it'll cost you everything. You're going to have to stand there when the thousands leave. You're going to have to hold on to Him when you're when your family members and friends and coworkers deny Him. There's no other way to approach this subject. Listen friends, it doesn't do you any good to believe in Jesus if you believe in the wrong one. And it doesn't help you to call yourself a Christian if you trust in a false Christ, you don't want to do that today.

I've had several people asked me recently, what I think about some of the TV shows that are out there about Jesus. And my answer is always the same. And that is that you should not get your theology of Christ from a TV show. You need to get it from the Bible. And when you do that, this is an aspect of Jesus that's often misunderstood. So, we're going to talk about this today by looking at four reasons why the disciples leave Jesus here in this passage. In fact, when you think about the whole TV show idea, I've often thought, what would this look like on the television? I don't think it would be very entertaining; I think it would look pretty rough. So that's what we're going to look at, so we can wrap our minds around his person. And in John 6, we're going to look at four reasons why the disciples leave, not the 12 disciples, but the other ones who call themselves disciples. And the first reason is this because His teaching is difficult.

The first reason why the crowds leave Jesus here is because His teaching is difficult, which means it was hard for them to accept. It's not what they had in mind. How many of you have ever experienced that before with Jesus? You read something, and it was not what you had in mind. We all have that. That's what these people faced. And if you look in verse 59, it says this. It says,

These things He said in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum. Therefore, many of His disciples when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

Now when it said these things were spoken in Capernaum, that's referring to one of the towns in the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's an important place because it was very instrumental in the life of Jesus. Matthew 4:13 tells us after Satan tempted Him in the wilderness, Jesus left Nazareth, and set up His ministry in Capernaum. That's the significance of this town. Several events in the Bible happen there. Capernaum is where Jesus healed a paralyzed servant in Matthew 8. It's where He healed Peter's mother-in-law in Luke 4. It's where Matthew's tax collector's booth was set up along with the home of Peter and Andrew. And so the idea here is that if you didn't know where Jesus was, Capernaum is the best place to look for Him. Chances are He's going to be coming through there. Verse 23 here in John 6 says that the feeding of the multitude took place somewhere around Tiberius, which was six miles away from Capernaum. And six miles doesn't sound too far, but it was if you had to row a boat there. And that's what these guys did. In the layout of the area, most of the winds in the sea of Galilee blew east off the Golan Heights. But these guys were heading the opposite way; they were going northwest, which would have made things very difficult because they were going against the wind. Yet Jesus impressed them so much that they made the trip anyway. I read several commentators this week that said in an area like Galilee, it may have been a long time since these men had ever been full. It's a poor place; they didn't have a lot of food. And so the miracle was one of the few times in their life, they might have been stuffed. And so they had to go back and ask for more in their minds. And if you notice, John gives us a reaction they have after they run into Him and talk a little while because it says this, "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement who can listen to it?'" And the word difficult here is *skeleros* in Greek, from which we get our English word scaly. It means dry or hard to touch, like the scales of a fish. Remember, they're near the Sea of Galilee, they're in Capernaum by the water; and so they're using a fisherman's term, to say that this is annoying. What this guy is saying is getting under our skin. The word "it" can also be translated "Him." So verse 60, could read on hearing it, many of His disciples said, this is a harsh statement, who can accept Him? "Who's going to put up with this guy?" They say, "Who's going to trust someone who says, 'You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood if you want eternal life?' That's too much. We don't like that. There's no way we're going to stomach it." And so they're preparing to leave Him.

This is what a lot of people do with Jesus, isn't it? Millions of churchgoers today leave Christ because they find His doctrine offensive. John MacArthur says it this way, he said, "These kinds of people have no problem viewing Jesus as a baby in a manger at Christmas; or as a social reformer with a broad message of love and tolerance; and as the ideal human being everybody should emulate; or as a source of health, wealth and happiness; but they're unwilling to embrace the biblical Christ, the God man who fearlessly rebukes sinners and warn them of eternal hell, and that salvation from hell comes only through believing in His name." That's right, people like a warm and fuzzy Jesus, but they don't like a harsh one.

And yet, there were times when Jesus was so harsh, people didn't know what to do with them. Just an example, let me give you some of the offensive things Jesus said during his ministry, or the things that made people stop and think. If you want to write these down, I'm gonna list off a couple of them. In Matthew 10:22, Jesus said, "All men will hate you because of Me." And if you notice, He didn't say

some men will hate you, but all men; and He didn't say a few people will despise you if you're His disciple; He said tons of them will. It will happen from every direction. People at work will be offended by you, and people at home will be offended by you. People at the grocery store will be turned off by your testimony; people at the hockey rink will be turned off. No one is exempt from that.

And Matthew 10:34 and 36, Jesus said, "Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I've come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter in law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." And that one reminds you that it won't be just anyone who will oppose you if you follow Christ; it will be the members of your family; it will be personal. We've had people come to Grace and ask us, "Why are my parents so mad at me for being a Christian now?" Well, this is why. Jesus said it would happen. Don't be surprised that that this is what you signed up for.

In Luke 14:33, He said, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple."

In John 15:20, He said, "Remember the words I spoke to you. No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you."

And Matthew 7:13, He said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it"

And we could just go on and on. It doesn't stop there. But I tell you that because there's times when the words of Christ were scary. there was *skeleros*, scaly, dry, unpleasant. All men will hate you because of Me, that is not a pleasant thought. There's nothing about that that's entertaining. I will turn a man against his father, that sounds awful. And yet it all came from the mouth of Jesus Christ. And the point is, you can't separate the pleasant Jesus from the unpleasant Jesus. You can't separate the Saviour of love who heals people and shows mercy and compassion from the Saviour who gives disagreeable truth. Jesus Christ is both. And I might add, this is one of the things that separates a hypocrite from a believer. And that's that a hypocrite never gets this. They never understand there's an unpleasant side to Jesus. For them, it's all fun and games. There's always something they're selfishly looking for from Him.

I don't know if the name Robert Schuller means much to you. But Robert Schuller was one of the first men to teach what became known as the Seeker Sensitive gospel in the 1980s. Which said that in order to reach people, churches should take a survey of what they wanted, and then give it to them. So if they want a gym, give them a gym. If they want a coffee bar, give them a coffee bar. If they want a better family, promise them a better family. They want rock and roll on the stage, give them rock and roll. But the problem with that approach is that it didn't last because his church eventually went bankrupt, trying to keep up with all the trends. Because that's not what it means to follow Christ. Listen, you follow



Christ whether there's a rock and roll band or not. Amen? And you trust in Him whether there's coffee or not. Say "amen" to that, people in British Columbia. All right? Say "Amen." We've had a few riots in the gym next door when there was no coffee. You don't come here for that. That's a secondary thing.

I heard one man says the task of a church to feed the sheep. And if someone comes in who's not a sheep, that's okay. We're not going to turn them away. But we're not going to change the sheep's menu and give them goats' food, in order to accommodate that. Worship is for the redeemed.

That brings us to another reason why the disciples leave here. And that is because they stumble over Him. A second reason why these people leave Jesus is because they stumble over Him, which means He makes them trip and fall. First, He makes them think. Next, He makes them bumble over His words. And as you go on the text here, you're gonna see a little back and forth between Jesus and the crowd. In fact, if you have a Bible where the words of Christ are in red, you can look back in chapter 6 and see that the text is it's full of red and black sections where the crowd says something and then Jesus says something. And then the people respond to that, and then He responds, and they just go back and forth because this isn't Jesus preaching a sermon here. This is Him interacting with people. It says quite a bit about the Lord that He didn't just preach and then go home. He talked to people. He helped them. He shepherded them and showed a lot of patience.

And if you read in verse 60, you get a taste of what they're talking about when it says,

Therefore, many of His disciples when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" But Jesus conscience that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"

Now, to give you a little perspective on this, if you look back in verse 41, there it says that the Jews or the leaders of the synagogue grumbled at Jesus. Now, it says that the disciples are doing it. Before, it said His enemies complained about what He was saying. Now it says His friends are doing it too because He's offending everybody here. Nobody knows what to do with Him at the moment.

This statement that the disciples didn't grumble out loud here, it means they did it quietly to themselves. They weren't speaking audibly. They were doing it sort of in a hushed tone, but Jesus knew what they said anyway. As Matthew Henry said, "Thoughts were like words to Christ." He could read their mind, and with that information He says, "Does this cause you to stumble?" And the word stumble here, it's another interesting word in Greek is the word *skandalizo* from which we get the word scandal. He's asking them, "Does this scandalize you?" It refers to something that makes you trip and fall. And in 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul uses this word when he says the gospel is a stumbling block or a *skandalizo* to the Jews. Because it gets in their way, and it blocks them from following God, and it makes them bumble, because they find it so offensive. And that's the way the words used here. Because in John 6, Jesus is asking the question, "You guys claim to believe in Me, but is this where you're going to leave me now? And you men say you're My disciples, but is this where you draw the line?"

I think it's helpful to point out that the reason this was coming to a head was because it had been building up for some time with these guys. This is not the first time that Jesus said something that they didn't like. For example, if you look in John 6:14 above this, it tells us that right after the miracle of the feeding of the multitudes, in verse 14, it says,

Therefore when the people saw the sign [the feeding] which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world." And so Jesus, perceiving they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew.

Now, that may not mean a lot to you when you read it as a Gentile; but at this time in history, the Jews were expecting the Messiah to come. And they wanted a king to show up in Israel and set up his throne there, and rescue them from the hated Romans, and some of them even wanted a king to come and set up a welfare state. They wanted him to arrive and feed everybody, so you didn't have to work anymore. And here Jesus feeds 15,000 people at once, so what they started thinking was, "Hey, this is the king. This is the guy we're looking for." And Jesus response to them is "No, I didn't come to feed your bellies first, I came to do something else," which frustrated them. That's the first *skandalizo* in the story. And the next day, after the thousands leave, apparently there was a group of men that still wanted to talk to Jesus. He still intrigued them, so they go find him in the synagogue. And verse 25, records the story this way, this is what happens next.

When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" And 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."

In other words, I know why you're here. You want more bread. I know why you showed up. You want to feed your bellies. You want a rock and roll show, but I'm telling you don't do that. You need to come to Me for eternal life. That's the second *skandalizo*.

Then as the story goes on, in verse 35, to drive this home, He says, "I am the bread of life." Then in verse 41, to do it again. He says, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." Then in verse 51, He says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven." Then in verse 53, He says, "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 you." But the point is that for this crowd, it was just scandal after scandal after scandal with Him. It was just shocking statement after shocking statement after shocking statement. Because after Jesus defended these people, you know, He doesn't say, "I know why you're leaving is because I didn't give you bread, so let me accommodate that. Here's some more bread. Let me meet your felt needs. Let me make you feel safe and warm." And He doesn't say, "I know why you're going. It's because I didn't give you all these things you want in a church like a gymnasium. Here's the gymnasium." He just told them the truth and let them



leave because for Jesus, salvation was simple. It was going to come through Him and if they didn't want that, fine.

I heard one pastor say that the problem with today's preachers is that no one wants to kill them anymore. You couldn't say that about Jesus, could you? There were times when everybody wanted to get at Him. Steve Lawson once said another problem with today's preachers is that they're too cowardly. Most of them are nothing but mild-mannered men telling mild mannered people to be more mild mannered when they go to church. He didn't do that either. There's nothing mild about what He's doing here. It's very blunt.

You know, I'll never forget the time a missionary told the story that he was talking to a neighbor about his need to come to Christ and have his sins forgiven. And the man kept saying. "Well, I can't come to Jesus now. I can't do it today, preacher, but maybe later." And so the missionary said to him, "Well, I want you to do me a favor, don't die. Because if you die, you'll go to hell; so between now and the next time I talk to you, stay alive." He said, the next day at church, the man was in the lobby pacing around back and forth after the service. And he came up to him and said, "I don't want to go to hell. Can you tell me how to be saved?". But that happened because he was willing to be bold enough to be scandalous; hurt his feelings. Jesus did that repeatedly. In fact, if you look back in the text in verse 61, when he says, "Does this cause you to stumble?" He's putting that in the form of a question, to draw it out of them. He's trying to make them think about this. And then He asked them another question in verse 62 when He says this, He says, "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?" And that means, if you can't believe Me now, how are you going to believe Me when I ascend into heaven, and be with My Father? He says this part of the story is the simple part. You believe in Me now, but if you can't, that's not gonna help, then. But the idea is that He said all these things as clearly as He could, and they didn't get it. Which brings us to another reason why the disciples leave Jesus here; and that is because they're of the flesh.

A third reason why the disciples or the crowds leave Jesus is because they're of the flesh, which means they leave Jesus because they really had no part of God to begin with. Their faith was entirely carnal. And in the progression of the text here, it's really hard to wrap your mind around why the people responded to Jesus this way, because they'd been following Him for a while. They knew He said strong things like this, so it shouldn't have surprised them so much, and so Jesus tells you why it does. If you look in verse 63, actually we'll start back in verse 61, but

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

Now, why does Jesus say that? What does the flesh and spirit have to do with this conversation? Well, He says that because He's telling this crowd, "You're rejecting Me because you're of the flesh. And

you're walking away from Me because you're not spiritual like you think you are.” That was a pretty offensive thing to say in a synagogue to Jews, by the way. They thought they were spiritual people, they believed they were holy, and they were standing in one of the most holy places on earth in their minds. And He's saying that's not enough. Without Me, that's meaningless.

And the term “flesh” here, it refers to the physical part of man or what he is like in his unregenerate state. Because the way it works is that man is born in the flesh, but he's raised in the Spirit. And his life starts in the body, but to be made alive spiritually, it has to happen by the power of God; and these men had not experienced that. Even though they followed Jesus, even though they traveled with Him for some time, even though they went all the way from Tiberius to Capernaum, to find Him, that change had never taken place inside of them, which is why they couldn't understand His words, by the way. Remember that the whole issue here is they're offended at His statement, “That unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves,” but the reason they're doing that is because they're interpreting it in a carnal way, literally. As if Jesus is teaching cannibalism. There's no way a man who did the things Jesus did would ever teach cannibalism; that's ridiculous, but these guys couldn't see that because they're unregenerate. They couldn't see the deeper meaning behind it all. We've all met people who grew up in church and listened to sermons for years and said, “I have no idea what that man is saying up there. I don't have a clue.” Well, that's because a lot of them are unregenerate. They don't see the deeper meaning. We've met other ones who do the same thing with the Bible because they read the Bible and they say, “That book is just a bunch of gibberish to me.” Well, that's because the Bible is talking about spiritual things, and the only way to understand it is to have the Spirit of God living inside of you. That's what this is referring to here because Jesus says it is the Spirit who gives life. And that means that the salvation is a work of the Spirit. It's not something man alone can do. It doesn't matter how far you row in the Sea of Galilee, that won't save you. It doesn't matter how much of your life you spend in the synagogue, that won't save you. It's the Spirit that saves. And He says, the flesh profits nothing, or in the ESV, it's of no help at all, because heaven is a spiritual place. God is a spiritual being; He's not fleshly. So to get to Him, you have to have the power of the Spirit, which is what Jesus words are, because He says, “The words I've spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” Which means if you would believe My words, Jesus says, you can be saved.

But if you look on in the text here, verse 64 says they won't believe because “there are some of you who do not believe.” Which is an interesting verse, because there you see the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man standing side by side, because the Spirit gives life, but you have to believe. And the Lord does it all, but you respond to Him in faith, otherwise, you don't have it. You can't sit there like a bump on a log and go to heaven. You have to take Jesus words and apply them to your lives. The reason Jesus says, “some of you do not believe” here is because the 12 disciples were in the crowd, and they did believe, all of them but Judas. People like Peter, and James, and John, they really did trust in Christ; but unfortunately, they're in the minority. We don't know how big this crowd was from the original crowd, but however big it was, the twelve are mixed in there somewhere. In fact, just to give you an example of someone who doesn't believe in the crowd, verse 64, goes on to say that “For Jesus

knew from the beginning, who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him,” and that is a reference to Judas. As he was the ultimate example of someone who lived by the flesh.

Sometime after this, Judas would become possessed by the devil, and sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; and I don't know about you, but you can't get more fleshly than that. He was not a spiritual man. And the reason John brings him up here, and I want you to listen to this is because when everyone else leaves Jesus, Judas stays behind. Isn't that's scary? When the thousands leave Christ the day before, and then the other crowd leaves Him the next day, Judas stays put. And it doesn't save him because his faith was just a show. That's what a hypocrite does. It's just trying to convince people they're something they're not. It's just carnal. It's just on the outside. He doesn't even believe in his heart. And I mention that because some of you may be doing that this morning. I mean, the whole point of this sermon is to get our minds to think around this. Some of you may be tricking us into thinking you're a follower of Christ when you're not. I don't have anybody in mind when I say that, but that's the point. Nobody knew Judas was doing this either. But if you come to church like we do, and you sing songs like we do, and you pray prayers like we do, but at the end of the day, your heart is far away from the Lord Jesus, you're a hypocrite. There's no other term for that. If you don't believe He's the bread of life, if you don't think He's the one who's come down from heaven, if you don't trust in Him completely for the forgiveness of sins, and you just believe He's a nice person, that is not enough to save you. It didn't save Judas; it won't save you. It takes more than that to be a Christian. You need to see Jesus as the Son of God.

And again, it's hard for us to put ourselves into the mindset of these people when they first heard this. But it's been said that there was nothing more precious to the Jewish diet at this time than bread. They ate bread with everything. They ate bread with their breakfast, they ate it with their lunch, they ate it with their supper. They had bread in the morning, bread in the afternoon and bread at nighttime before going to bed. Some of the homes were so poor that the only thing they had on the table at certain meals was bread. They couldn't afford anything else, and with that in mind, Jesus says if you want to be saved, you have to approach Me like that. You have to come hungry, as if your life depends on it. And a lot of these disciples did that, but the crowds didn't. Judas didn't. And it brings us to one more reason why the disciples leave Jesus in John 6.

Just to review these other ones, the first one is because His teaching is hard. Secondly, it makes them stumble. Thirdly, they're of the flesh. But a fourth reason why the disciples leave Jesus here. That is because they didn't think like Peter did.

A fourth and final reason why the disciples leave here is because they didn't think like Peter did, which means they didn't have the same kind of love and devotion that he had for the Lord, and I'll show you that in just a minute.

But this next one is important because so far, we've talked about how the disciples leave Christ here, but we haven't seen them do that yet. So we want to do that now. Because after telling them all this other

stuff, Jesus says this in verse 65, “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.’” Now, the word “granted” here, it's very similar to the idea of what he was saying in verse 63, that it is the Spirit who gives life. In other words, salvation is all of God. And in theological terms, we would say, it's monergistic not synergistic. It's not something God and man do together; it's something God does alone. It has to be granted. And when it says “He was saying this to them,” that verb is in the continuous tense, which implies that He was saying it repeatedly. And He was calling out to them as they were leaving because as these people were walking out the door, He was reminding them that they're leaving because the Lord hadn't called them and done a work inside their soul. And He's saying this as a warning.

Then verse 66 is the crux of the whole issue. Because it says that “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.” And when it says that “as a result of this,” that means that as a result of the whole story, they left. As a result of His miracle, and as a result of their misunderstanding of it, and as a result of His hard teaching and their hard hearts and their fleshly nature, they abandon Him. They turn their back, and they walk away. The word “anymore” shows you the severity of the situation because not only did they stop walking with Him, but they stopped walking with Him anymore. This was an irrevocable decision on their part. This would be the last miracle these people would ever see Jesus do, far as we know. This would be the last message they would ever hear Him teach, and this would be the last time they would ever draw near to Him. This message, this whole thing pushed them over the edge. Earlier in the Gospel of John when Jesus clears the temple, it refers to the Passover. Here in John 6 it mentions the Passover again, which means about a year occurs between the cleansing of the temple and this event. So these people might have been around Him for a year or something like that. Now it's all over.

As a matter of fact, verse 67, starts off by mentioning the twelve. It says, “So Jesus said to the twelve.” And if you're wondering why He said this to the 12, the implication is that because that's the only ones that were left. He pushed the rest of them away. Again, He starts off with 15,000 people the day before, now He has a dozen, which would be hard for these guys to handle because as I told you, a lot of them came from Galilee. And so they knew people in the crowd. The day before they would have been hometown heroes; this day they're hometown zeroes. All within a 24-hour period of time, which is a bitter pill to swallow. And so Jesus turns to these guys, and He says this in verse 67, “You do not want to go away also do you?” Now, that question is actually phrased in a positive way, because Jesus knew these men were loyal. He's not attacking them. He just wants to shepherd them through it because He could see the look on their faces. “Jesus, what are you doing? How could You drive all these multitudes away from You?” So He talked to them about that. And what Peter says in verse 68, the answer is so beautiful. If you look, it says, “Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” Can I just say that is the solution to the problem of hypocrisy today?

We've said a lot about the issue of being a hypocrite and how common it is, but we haven't talked about the answer. And this is the answer. You have to stop the sin of hypocrisy by saying to yourself, “

To whom else should we go?” Jesus, You're the best thing that ever happened to us. We could search the world and back again, we'll never find anything better than You. We could go to this religious teacher or that religious teacher; we could go to this synagogue or that synagogue; we could turn to you name it, we could turn to money, we could turn to pride; nothing is as good as You. You're not always easy to follow; that's true. There's times when You make everybody mad, Jesus, but we would be lost without You. You have the words of life.

And when I think of all the passages in the Bible that were an encouragement to me when I first got saved, I would say this was at the top of the list. Because I had tons of lost friends who kept asking me questions I couldn't answer about my faith. I was a philosophy major. And they would ask me, “How do you know God exists? And why does He allow so much suffering? And does the Bible have errors in it?” And as a new Christian, I couldn't answer all that; it discouraged me. But the one thing I kept coming back to is this, where else am I gonna go? There's no one like Christ. He's the most original person in the universe. So when people kept harassing me with their skeptical doubts, I kept saying, “Give me something better. What's left for me without Him?” Atheism? That's depressing. No God, no hope, no eternity; you want me to choose that? No joy, no peace, no reason why anything exists. Agnosticism? that's not better. The term agnosticism in Latin is *ignoramus*; I don't want that. If you don't know anything about a subject, it's best to keep quiet. Buddhism? That's not even a religion in many ways. Islam is too violent to represent a God of love. Liberalism is no different than the world I'm already in. Legalism is impossible to carry out. What is left for you without Christ? Nothing. You have nothing. And what Peter is saying to you today is that you can't be neutral about Jesus. You can't stand in the middle of the row when it comes to how you look at Him because one crowd abandons Him in John 6, and these guys stayed. One group rejects Him because they find Him too offensive; the other group accepts Him; and it's always been that way. He's a lightning rod. He always calls for a choice every time you encounter Him in the Bible.

And next week, we're going to be back in the book of Hebrews because we're going to look at the Hall of Faith in order to see several examples of people who had the right kind of faith. And they followed God for the right reasons, because they came to Him as the source of life, as if their soul depends on it. Before we get there, I just wanted to cover this passage with you because I want it ringing in your ears. This is the wrong way to approach the issue of religion. You can't pick and choose the things about God that you like. You can't pick and choose the things about Jesus that are comfortable to you; it doesn't work that way. You embrace the whole thing, or you don't get anything at all. And when everyone else abandons Him around you, you can't do it. You have to stay by His side. And we're going to talk about that more next time, so please come back and join us for that.

You know, in my studies this week, I came across a very interesting story of the time an atheist challenged the evangelist, H. A. Ironside to a debate in order to prove to him that there was no God. And H. A. Ironside accepted, but he said that “Before we have a debate, I have one request. I want you to find 100 men whose lives had been changed by your atheism and bring them to the conference hall. And

I will bring 100 men who have been changed by Christ and do the same. In fact, I'll bring you 1000 men if you want them, I'll bring you 10,000." The atheist declined the invitation because he couldn't do it. You see, atheism has never changed a man like Jesus did. He's the only one who can do this, but you have to trust in Him for who He is. And will you do that today? Let me close us in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, of all the stories in the Bible that seem to cut to the heart of our problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, this may be one of the ones at the top of the list. So we thank You for recording this. Lord, and teaching us the boldness and bluntness and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, there's not a man, woman or child in here who doesn't need eternal life. There's none of us in here who doesn't need forgiveness for sins, and that forgiveness is offered through Him; but it's only offered if we see Him the way He is. Lord, is it takes courage to believe this. It takes conviction to come to Christ this way. It takes humility, it takes the ability to turn from our sins and say He's more important than anything in the world. And I pray that our church family would have a vision of that in this next year. We've been talking about our vision for the year, our vision is that we want the whole Christ. We want to see Him as He's presented to us here, as the bread.

Lord, this is such a beautiful story. Thank You for the ending of it. Thank You that we got to see what Peter did and what the other disciples said about you. Lord, may we have the same heart that he does. We're tempted Lord in this world. And there's so many things that want to pull our hearts away from the Saviour, pull us here, pull us there; but that's all foolishness. What else is there without Him?

And we pray You help us to have a vision and a heart for that today, as we go up from this place. As we take the Lord's Supper, it's very fitting to remember what our Saviour has done in light of this passage. Lord, would You help us to take it in a special way? To examine our hearts, entrusting them wholly to Christ as the bread of life. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.