**8/25/24**

**Which Physician are you seeking?**

**John 6:56-69 (NRSV)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

One thing that I have noticed over the past two weeks is that unfortunately many of you out there have been sick in one way or another. There obviously has been some kind of virus that has been hitting quite a few people in various ways all over the place. Fortunately, enough it is not another huge bout of COVID this time. Thankfully, it also seems that a lot of people are doing better already, or are currently on the mend.

So, In regards to this I actually have some questions here for all of you. So, did most of you that were sick lay around and hope for this to leave your bodies on its own? Or did most of you that were sick keep pushing through because you knew you had to? Did some of you actually ask for help, or get help to complete things, and even have others cleaning and sanitizing to keep themselves and others safe as well? Did some of you manage to pray for restored health, or even have others doing so for you whether you asked for it or not? Did some of you actually breakdown and take some over-the-counter medications, take in more fluids, and do other things in order to try and get some relief? Did some of you maybe even finally decide to call on or go see a physician, whether it be at the ER or Urgent Care or your PCP office, and get some advice and alternative methods of treatment? What a barrage of questions, feelings, and things to consider for something as simple as a virus running around right?

Well, I admit that I was unfortunately one of these folks we are speaking of here. After a few days of not feeling well, my voice then decided to change course, and it even tried to do a disappearing act on me. I knew it was at this point for certain that I could not handle this on my own any longer. Now, through all of this I of course had been talking to God, and I am thankful for others who also intervened and had been praying for my strength and healing as well. I too was praying for others going through various illnesses, and checking in where I could via calls or texts or emails. So, after surveying everything, I finally broke down and checked in with my earthly physician. I had to eventually get what would restore me and bring me back to my so-called normal health and mind. However, that was only a quick solution or temporary fix, for we know our health is something we need to work on day in and day out. It is precisely like our faith. Without daily care for self and without partaking in the meal of scripture and prayer then we are not getting our fill. We are not engaging. We are not taking care of ourselves the way the Lord has taught us in order to be well, and to live our best lives right here and right now. Now, I am not sure you expected me to make that connection, but that is indeed the limb I am going out on here.

So, as you sit out there in your pews and on the conference call, I wish you continued health, healing, and restoration. I am glad that you came into this community and this congregation once again to seek out the Great Physician and his Word that we hear and we sing throughout our Worship Service. I am glad that you came to join me at this very table a little bit later to hear the words that were recorded and to even partake in the great meal of bread and wine, the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all need this experience together to be able to find restoration from the illness of sin and the like that has a grasp on our lives constantly, and is far greater than some temporary virus that is wreaking havoc on our systems and lives.

So, this is precisely where I get to address this subject of bread again for a fifth straight week from the Gospel of John. I mean I get that this topic is of extreme importance, and that there is a particular reason it is emphasized for so many consecutive weeks in this particular lectionary. However, as someone who has not had this happen over the course of years of a career in the ministry, I must admit that it has been very hard and even frustrating managing to come up with something each and every week. However, just as my earthly physician repeatedly deals with so many people with varied illnesses and responds by providing comfort, healing, prescribing medications, and giving continual reminders I came to realize that this is precisely how our Great Physician operates too! Our Lord and Savior deals with the constant illness of sin and the lack of belief, but he deals with it day in and day out with and for us. Our God has sent the Spirit to be continually with us and fight all the struggles and sickness of this world. We need to remember this, and not feel as if we are going at things alone. Jesus is constantly reminding us that the truth and the way is only through his Father and with the Spirit for, he indeed has been sent and has the words of eternal life.

Through this very teaching the people back then, and even us now, need to open our hearts and minds in a different way. Just as the focus is again on eating his flesh and drinking his blood it is more than just that physical nature. It is about a true relationship built on trust and love. It is about building a life with our Triune God in and through all three facets of their divine nature. Unfortunately, the people struggled to believe and accept such a hard teaching for they only saw and heard things at a surface level. We admittedly do that from time to time as well, whether we like to admit to it or not, for we struggle to believe and accept such a hard teaching as well. The people back then get to the point of focusing on all of their practices and beliefs, and taking things so literally, that they just turn away from Jesus. They turn away from the very faith and the belief that even brought them to that very place and decision. We unfortunately do that too. We all prefer the warm and cuddly message, and we do not always want to have to dig in or hear things that make us uncomfortable or stretch us. So, when Jesus does not back off a bit, or even explain things a little bit more, and try and hold people in they get confused, and so do we. It can be even thought of as awkward or uncomfortable that he presses even further, and calls them out for their lack of belief and conviction. It can be awkward for us too when he does this to us in the here and the now. He does not desire folks who are lukewarm, and have no desire to be his disciples and go out there and take the Word to others and share it without their entire heart and conviction. He is aware that they and ourselves will get chewed up and spit out because the world and people can be very rough at times. Jesus indeed has a desire for continued discipleship, and the lifelong journey is not always easy. He does not want us seeking a temporary fix, but he wants us to be focused on him who is the true and forever fix to any sickness or concern we or anyone else will ever encounter.

Jesus has the true words of eternal life, the true disciples will not turn away from Him, even though some of His teachings may challenge them, make them uncomfortable, and demand a change in them. Simon Peter speaks up and speaks out with conviction so that the people, and his close disciples, come to the very understanding of who this individual is standing in front of them. Jesus is the living, breathing, flesh and blood of the very scriptures they have been studying. Jesus is the embodiment of what they have been desiring and wanting for so long. His presence is their very present, as long as they are willing to accept and fully believe it.

Again, this is where you and I come into the story here. “Jesus has the true words of eternal life, we will not turn away from Him, even though some of His teachings may challenge us, make us uncomfortable, and demand a change in us.” (7) The mission is not to keep messing up and to keep getting mad and to keep walking away. The mission is to dive in and figure things out. The mission is to come to the table with our hearts fully open. The mission is to go from here healed and restored to be able to share how awesome that is with others out there beyond our church walls and our house doors. We are the church is not some crazy little catchphrase developed for no purpose or reason. We are the church is and was developed to remind us that we go out into the world and extend the love of Christ and the story with others. That is all the gruesome details as well at times, because that is what makes our faith so real. Jesus was indeed a living human being that took on everything you and I do each day. We can share that with others as they come to eat up this knowledge and be fed through our very belief and conviction as well.

Unfortunately, our world is spiritually sick, and it was during Jesus’ time on earth as well. Unfortunately, our world has so many other things to focus on at times that it forgets to focus on the real and living author of life, and that occurred back then too despite them not having televisions and the so-called busy schedules. Unfortunately, our world would much rather go to a doctor for a short-term fix, and not fully fix their lives for the long-term and go to the Great Physician. That happened back then as well, as it is easy not to see sickness not only and always being at surface level. It is a shame how we all struggle to identify the very thing that Simon Peter stated to end out our Gospel Reading today in verses 68 and 69. Let me read that out loud again, and let’s see if it hits you the way that it really should. “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (2)

As we end things out here let me share a story with you from my research in order to try and shed some light on things a little bit differently. “One of the soldiers of Frederick the Great, a powerful Prussian king, could not afford a watch. Instead, he wore a bullet attached to his watch chain. Having noticed this, Frederick decided one day to have some fun at the man's expense: "My watch tells me that it is five o'clock," he declared, taking out a beautiful diamond-studded timepiece. "What does yours say?" "My watch does not tell me the hour," the soldier replied undaunted. "It tells me every minute that it is my duty to die for Your Majesty." So pleased was the king with the man's response that he promptly handed him his own watch. "Take this," he ordered, "so that you may know the hour as well." (8)

“It is the kind of loyalty Jesus has shown to us. It is the kind of commitment we want to show to Him. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we do not want to be a short-lived disciple. We want to remain close and committed to our Savior. We want His blessings and gifts. We want to be shining examples to our world. May our loyalty be seen and shown to all.” (8)

Amen and Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year B 2024

 August 25th, 2024

 14th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) Bible.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 There is no other person to whom believers can go

 August 25, 2024

 Commentary on John 6:56-69

 Peter Claver Ajer

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Although Jesus’ words “I am the bread of life” are familiar to many Christians, in this

 passage the disciples declare this to be a “hard saying.”1

 August 26, 2018

 Commentary on John 6:56-69

 Susan Hylen

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

 For the fifth Sunday in a row we find ourselves in John 6, but as this long account

 comes to its end, there are some disturbing surprises.

 August 23, 2009

 Commentary on John 6:56-69

 Brian Peterson

(7) SermonCentral.com

 Going All In For Jeus

 Contributed by Stan Simonik on Aug 24, 2006

 Scripture: John 6:56-69

 Denomination: Lutheran

(8) SermonCentral.com

 Loyalty Lost?

 Contributed by David Zachrich on Aug 18, 2024

 Scripture: John 6:56-69

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Introduction**

 In today’s gospel many people take offense at Jesus’ invitation to eat his flesh

 and drink his blood; even many of Jesus’ disciples peel off. This is the backdrop

 in John’s gospel for Peter’s confession of faith. “To whom can we go?” asks

 Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. “You have the

 words of eternal life.” In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did,

 Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we

 might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.

**John 6:56-69 (NRSV)**

The “hard saying” that offends Jesus’ disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: “To whom shall we go?”

 [Jesus said,] 56“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” 59He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

 60When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” 61But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. 65And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

 66Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” 68Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

Jesus is constantly reminding us that the truth and the way is only through his Father and with the Spirit for, he indeed has been sent and has the words of eternal life.

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

The people struggle to believe and accept such a hard teaching.

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

We struggle to believe and accept such a hard teaching.

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

Jesus has the true words of eternal life, the true disciples will not turn away from Him, even though some of His teachings may challenge them, make them uncomfortable, and demand a change in them.

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

“Jesus has the true words of eternal life, we will not turn away from Him, even though some of His teachings may challenge us, make us uncomfortable, and demand a change in us.” (7)

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):** John 6:56-69 (NRSV)

**Theme (42-48):** Eat His Flesh and Drink His Blood

**Doctrine (48-50):** Salvation

**Need (50-52):** Eternal Life

**Image (52-56):** The Great Physician

**Mission (56-57):** To take the Word to others and share it.