

It's been a hard 2 weeks. You can't imagine how hard. The internet here at church has down due to the road construct wiped out our line. You should already be feeling sorry for me for my hard life. Some people don't have clean water or much food, are persecuted, but my life is hard. How many of us could go half a day without our smart phone, what a hard life that would be. If you've never owned a smart phone. God bless you.

Life can be truly hard. Hard when it hurts. Hard things in life come up; hard when someone sins against you, when people do what they shouldn't; hard to resist sin, to choose those things that are good and right. Like the people in the OT lesson, Joshua tells them, are you going to act like God's people? Choose this day whom you will serve. Some of you, like me, have that Scripture on the wall at home, **As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.** The people have a resounding: Yes! We will serve the Lord. But the very next verse 19, that you didn't hear today, Joshua says, you can't do it. You will fail, for He is a holy God and look at you, filthy sinners.

Thanks be to God, He chose you before the foundation of the world, does all things, saved by grace alone without any deciding on our part. And now life as His child is full of choices.

Those admonitions in the Epistle, to walk as His child –we all really want an easy life; not that we're lazy, but think life as a Christian should be easy. We think we should have a better life than the unbeliever. I shouldn't stink as much as other non-Christian. None of us should have it hard. Work, school, family, relationships, should be easy. No one should have a bad day. And God should be easy, easy to work with, easy to understand, easy doctrine, easy not to sin, easy to live as His people.

But it is a hard life, because we are His, because you bear His name. He says things that are hard.

There with Jesus. How can He say those things? **They said, this is a hard saying, who can listen? Offended by Him.** Most stopped walking with Him.

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever, the bread I give, is my flesh for the life of the world. In many ways, this sermon of Jesus goes back to Bethlehem. The Word became Flesh. The incarnation, the fact God has become man, most important truth in human history. The scandal of Christianity is we worship a man; our God is also true man. Our salvation rests in this flesh and blood person, Word made flesh; to consume this flesh is to consume the Word. Yes a spiritual eating and drinking of Christ; but there's even more going on here.

You can't avoid Jesus very words, they mean what they say. He even changes up the verb a bit just so we don't miss the point as He goes from using the verb "eat" to "feed." Feed, means rending with the teeth. That sort of thing. That's why it's a hard saying; offends them, disciples go from grumbling to leave him.

It's really rather amazing. Disciples, even after spending day and night listening to perfect sermons, perfect Bible study, after seeing thousands fed, even walking on water. People leave Him as He dared to speak of His flesh as food, His blood as drink. Our Lord's Gospel is not tolerant of different views, opinions, or man's ideas; Jesus does not back down; He's even more blunt, **My flesh is real food, my blood real drink.** And Jesus is not softening the message, chasing after those He offended.

Jesus words are always offensive to unbelief. How are we supposed to feed on His flesh and drink His blood and so have His life in us? How can "is" mean "is"? How can water and His Word do great things in baptism? How can a man there forgive sins with His authority? The scandal is always here. Every Sunday. Jesus is more than just information or an abstract relationship but here to be in communion, united, abiding in you.

Lord to whom shall we go? You know. We aren't here to be fed with entertainment or even emotionally uplifted. If that's why people come, they'll likely leave as disappointed as the disciples who left Jesus. This place is for dead people to have life. A place for sinners to die. To be emptied of yourselves, to be filled with the food He gives, raised to new life in Him.

You are blessed with this hard life, His hard sayings that you embrace by faith. Hard life to struggle with choices, to live according to His Word; struggle against sin. You want an easy life, just leave the church. But the only life here worth living, the only true life there is, is a life that is hard. Hard offensive words from Jesus to rebuke you, teach you to repent. Hard words that give you life, communion with God. Hard words to your old self, offensive to the world but no truer or beautiful words you could ever hear.

Jesus says **the one eating my flesh, drinking my blood has** (present tense, right now) **eternal life.** Eternal life, when you grasp the depth, really beyond all thought, the implications of what the gift of eternal life means for you today, each day, that He abides in you it can make so many of your hard days, hard times seem inconsequential, trivial. Hold tight to His offensive words, that defy the wisdom of man yet bring You His blessed gifts. Embrace a hard life abiding, joined to Him, Lord may it never be any other way.