

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.**

<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

<sup>62</sup> What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. <sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

<sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. <sup>67</sup> “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” **This is God’s Word for God’s people.**

**Dear Friends,**

Sometimes life seems easier if we don’t ask questions. If we don’t ask questions, then we don’t have to deal with the answers. That’s why the military had the policy, “Don’t ask, don’t tell.” They didn’t want to deal with the issue of homosexuality. Or a parent may suspect that their teenage son is on drugs, but it’s much easier just to keep quiet and not ask. Sometimes life is just much easier that way – less stressful and less waves if we don’t ask tough questions. There are times when we avoid questions because it is easier to not know. But sometimes questions are good. Sometimes direct questions help us decide exactly where we stand and may even prompt us to action.

As Jesus finished his Bread of Life discourse he knew there was a lot of grumbling about the content of his message. It would have been easier to move on to some other area or to some other subject but this was an important moment in his ministry and in the lives of these people. It was time for Jesus to ask **“Two All Decisive Questions.”** The first was pretty direct and to the point, **“Does My Teaching Offend You?”** and the second was just as important, **“You Do Not Want to Leave Me too, Do You?”**

**I. “On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”**

The term disciple is used in a very general way in this context. It refers to those folks who had heard about Jesus and his message. They may have come out to be healed or to see some miracles. These aren’t enemies of Jesus, like the Pharisees, but they haven’t been following Jesus for very long. Some may be believers but if they have faith, it is very new and might be a somewhat weak faith.

What they found hard to accept was the teaching that Jesus came from heaven as God’s Son. That he is the Bread of Life who brings spiritual life to all those who believe. That he is the only way to heaven. It was not hard to understand what Jesus had been saying but it was offensive to many who heard it. This teaching of salvation through faith in Jesus went against everything they had been taught. It went against the social norms of work righteousness. It went against their human logic that mankind somehow has to contribute in towards their salvation.

And then the question, **“Who can accept it?”** It’s like asking the person next to you, “What do you think?” “Do you really agree with this?” That’s the grumbling Jesus became aware of. This rumbling of thought going through the crowd building towards the rejection of Jesus and his teaching. Jesus knew exactly what was going on. That’s why he asked, **“Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”** If they were having a problem with this teaching what about what was to come? What would they do when he ascended to the cross to pay for the sins of the world? What about his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to heaven? How would they handle that? Where would taking offense at the actions of Jesus stop?

Jesus continued by telling them, **“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”** Even in the midst of their grumbling, Jesus was trying to focus them on what was most important and to warn them to not let their human logic push away the words that bring life.

But, **“From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”** They didn’t like the message and so they turned back to their old ways of work righteousness. They had wanted a ‘Bread King’ but Jesus did not give them what they wanted, he gave them something better, the bread of life, but they rejected it because it would mean a change in their way of thinking and their way of life – a change they weren’t willing to make.

Do you see Satan’s handiwork as he used their stubborn human reason as a weapon against themselves? The Devil is so good at creating doubt in one’s mind that leads to a struggle with the truths found in God’s Word. Satan used the very same tactic with Eve in the garden and he used it on the Jews as Jesus preached about being the Bread of Life. The Jews grumbled and said, **“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”** (John 6:52) Their sinful human reason got in the way of the life-giving words of Jesus. Didn’t they realize that God’s Word has eternal consequences. It is the source of eternal life but for some it brings eternal death. We can see this by the actions of those disciples who turned back and no longer followed Jesus.

Scripture tells us, **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him”** (John 3:36). By turning their backs on Jesus, they lost the greatest treasure in the entire world, the complete and total forgiveness of sins that God grants us through faith in his Son.

So where do we fit into this picture? We all have turned our back on Jesus at one time or another. There are times when we too found God’s Word offensive because it didn’t fit in with some aspect of our life we were unwilling to give up.

But where we have failed, Jesus has succeeded. While we are busy sinning, Jesus is busy forgiving. Where we fail to live up to God’s requirements, Jesus kept God’s requirements perfectly for us. And where God required the penalty of death for our sin, Jesus willingly, out of love for you and me, went to the cross to give up his life to pay that penalty so that we will have eternal life in heaven with him.

It seems so easy to walk away from Jesus but that is spiritual suicide. When we take offense at the teachings found in scripture may we seek God’s help in understanding those words and

God's strength to change our lives to conform to his will. May we never be offended to the point where we follow the crowd rather than scripture. That's why Jesus' next question was just as important, **"You do not want to leave me too, Do you?"**

**II.** Now Jesus is talking to the Twelve. Those he has personally called to follow him and be his disciples. Are they going to follow the crowd? Did they find his message offensive? What a great answer Peter gives, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."** Where would they go? To the Pharisees or some other false religion of the times or one of the various human philosophies of the time – none of them could bring them forgiveness or eternal life. Those other options might make them feel good for a period of time but they were also called 'empty ways of life.'

Only Jesus had the words of eternal life. **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12). Even though the disciples didn't have the whole picture they recognized Jesus as the Savior of the world and the only source of eternal life. What a beautiful picture of faith Peter gives us as he professes to know, accept and trust the words of his Savior.

"You do not want to leave me too, Do you?" That question is for each one of us also. There are a lot of worldly influences that would tempt us to leave the church. Influences from our neighbors and friends to reject the teachings found in scripture or to find other priorities to take over our lives. And at times, we are offended too. Not that God's Word is offensive in itself, but that we take offense at the teachings we disagree about.

"You do not want to leave me too, Do you?" I would hope your answer would be the same as Peter's, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."** Where else can you find God's grace that brings you eternal life through faith? **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.** Where else can you find the gift of life that is given to you as a free gift? **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.** Where else can you find daily forgiveness, true peace and comfort. Where else can you find strength to live your lives for your gracious God?

There will be days when the teachings of scripture might offend you – when you might find them to be hard to accept. At those times think about these decisive questions of Jesus. Ask yourself why does God's Word offend you and don't forget about God's grace. As the days and weeks and months go by, may your confession always be the same as Peter's, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."** You are our Savior! Amen.