

Sermon John 6 51 71 12th S af Pent S B

Sermon: 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: John 6:51-71 (vv. 66-69)

Theme: To whom shall we go?

Goal: To direct the listeners to the Truth, warning them not to leave Jesus.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: St. Thomas could have many more members if all who once joined St. Thomas would have remained faithful. Of course, some were called by God and are now in the heavenly church. Some have moved to other cities and are faithful members in the church there. But some took offense on what the pastor preached or said or did; others took offense on a brother or sister of the church; some became warm luck in his/her faith; or something happened in his/her life that pulled him/her away from the Christian fellowship; or personal issues and other priorities were/are more important than the church. Sorry for them. They need our urgent prayers!

To be member of a church is not just like to be member of a club, where I go to enjoy the gym, or some sports, or friends. To be member of a church is to be part of the body of Christ, the “*holy Christian Church, the communion of Saints*”, as we confess in the Creed. What can be more important than to be in fellowship with Jesus and with His family?

I – To whom shall we go?

Many people were following Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. Some were faithful followers and were always ready to listen to Him and to serve Him. Others were there just to receive some special blessing: help in their sicknesses or a piece of bread. And others were just observing to find something to accuse Him, as the

Pharisees did.

The long sermon on The Bread of Life took place in the synagogue in Capernaum. We have been talking about this teaching of Jesus for the past couple of weeks. Having the background of the Feeding of the 5000, Jesus taught about the true Bread of life: He Himself and the sacrifice of His body and blood on the cross. “On hearing it, many of His disciples said: This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” And “many turned back and no longer followed Him”.

They had the true Bread of Heaven in front of them, they were able to touch Him, hear His voice, - but they didn't believe in Him. The lack of faith caused them to take offense in Jesus' teaching and to leave Him. They couldn't accept some of His teachings and therefore they rejected all His teachings and eventually Jesus Himself. Each of them returned to their own way of life, looking for someone who could please their ears. Sorry. They had the Light of God, but they preferred to go back to the darkness. The apostle Paul warns us against this in the Epistle for today (Eph 5:6-21): “Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

When Jesus saw this, he challenged His closest disciples: “You do not want to leave too, do you?”

This is a crucial question when we are lukewarm, or in doubts, or facing some special temptation. Where shall we go for help? Is there anyone who can help? Can we help ourselves and solve our problems by ourselves? Will it help if we turn back and don't want Jesus' help anymore?

Peter answered to the challenge of Jesus, on behalf of the Twelve: “Lord, to whom shall we go?” No, Lord, we will not turn back like the others. There is no other Way, there is no other Light, there is no other Hope. We will remain faithful to You!

Peter promised faithfulness to Jesus again just before Jesus was to be arrested. Peter said: “Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You” (Mark 14:31). And we know the story, how Peter and the others deserted Jesus and fled when Jesus was arrested by the soldiers.

This shows us how weak we are in our faith and how we have to rely on Jesus and on His grace only!

II – You have the Words of Eternal Life!

Coming back to our text, Peter gave the reason why they couldn't go to anyone else but Jesus: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

The emphasis on the *Words of Jesus* is of great comfort to us. We cannot see Jesus or listen to Him personally any more, as the disciples could. But we have His Words! We have the Gospel, through which the Holy Spirit opens our heart and warms it up with Jesus' love and salvation. The Bible is not just empty words, as some despise it; but it is the “Word of eternal life”. Without the Word of Jesus, revealed by God in the Bible, we were lost, totally lost. “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” confesses the Psalmist (119:105) in this beloved verse.

The Bible is not just a rule book for our daily lives, as some use it, like a guide for godly life. Of course the Bible has lots of good counsels and rules for our lives. But books of other religions have it too. Only the Bible has “Words of Eternal life”, because it brings and gives us God's love and the forgiveness conquered by Jesus on the cross, the Bread of Life. Only forgiven by Christ we can enter the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life.

The Third Commandment says: *“We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.”* - When someone misses the Service or abandons the church, he is losing the chance to be close to Jesus and to receive the blessings of eternal life through Jesus' Words of life.

III – We believe and know that...

The second reason Peter presents why he couldn't turn from Jesus is: “Lord, to whom shall we go?...We believe and know that You

are the Holy One of God.” Faith and knowledge. Faith is not something floating in the air; but faith is based on the knowledge of God's revelation in the Bible. Therefore Martin Luther put it as one of the pillars of the Reformation: *Sola Scripture*, this means: Only the Scripture. The others are: *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*: Only by grace, only by faith. Grace and faith comes through the preaching and teaching of the Scripture, the living Word of Jesus.

The disciples believed and acknowledged that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the promised Messiah, sent by God to redeem humankind. This faith was not based only on the miracles and deeds performed by Jesus, but it was a gift of God, - as it is for us too. We, as believers, are a sign that God is still working through the same Words of Jesus, calling His people out of the darkness to His light and to His Kingdom in Christ. We have to thank God for this blessing and cling to Him with our whole heart and life, so that temptations will not take us away from His grace and love.

Conclusion: “To whom shall we go?” Shall we turn from Jesus and follow the example of those who couldn't accept His words? Shall we leave the church and follow our own paths, as many had already done? Shall we run after the wind, without hope? No, we know that this would take us to condemnation.

We are still in the time of grace. God is gracious and allows us to listen to the Words of Eternal Life regularly, while many don't have this good opportunity. God comes to us through His Word, and through His Word plus Bread and Wine, so that the Holy Spirit can work in our hearts, strengthened our faith and our hope. Our confession can only be: “Lord, To whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God”. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle

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