

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

John 6:60-69

“Lord, to whom shall we go?”

Well, we’ve come to the end of John 6. It only took us four weeks to get here. What a colossal chapter of Holy Scripture! Does any other chapter give us so clear a view of our Savior? He is loved for His miracle, hated for His words. He is spurned for His humanity. He is questioned about His divinity. He is surrounded by crowds. He asks the handful that remains if they will leave Him also. Sought out and then forsaken, loved and then hated, listened to and then not heard, praised and then grumbled about. This is no easy Jesus to come to grips with. This is no easy Jesus to follow. This is the Jesus whose path to the promised land is filled with bumps and bruises, with hills and narrow gates. Yet, just as the Jews had two choices: true God or no God, the Christian has the same: true Jesus or no Jesus.

We all prefer the pretty boy Jesus, don’t we? You know, the one who looks like a god. The one to whom everything comes easily. The one whose luck and luster rubs off on his friends. We want the girly Jesus, who remembers your birthday, packs your lunch, and gives you a hug when you feel down. We want the buddy Jesus. We want the Jesus who never says anything much deeper than we’d expect from some Hollywood celebrity or toddler, but who sure is fun to be around. We want the Jesus who says, “That’s ok.” We want the Jesus who winks and nods, who high fives and never questions our actions, even the dumbest ones. We want the Jesus who speaks easy answers to doubt and not hard answers to faith. We want, at least once in a while, to have Jesus just relax, just chill, just, you know, stop being so Jesusy.

But we will find no such Jesus in reality. No, rather we find the Jesus before us today. We have a Jesus who faced hard times, who said hard things, who preached a hard and narrow road. We have the Jesus, who like a bad guest in our flesh, offends. We have a Jesus who speaks to faith, and not to reason or emotion, although faith will eventually take both captive as well. What is up with that! No fair! No fun! But nothing is fair or fun about the innocent and righteous Son of God dying on a cross for the sin for which we are guilty, for our unrighteousness. Who said the Christian life was fair? Who said the Christian life was always fun?

“Hard words”—that is what the crowd says Jesus speaks. Hard words. Hard here means obstinate, scandalous, and offensive. He offended them. He scandalized them. They could not take His speaking any longer. Those who would eat His bread would not digest His words. Those who would sit at His feet would not hang on His words. Yet Jesus had no choice. He was obstinate. He was hardened. He was hardened in love. There was no path He could take but the one to the cross. There was no answer to their questions but the hard one. God had not made it a hard answer. Sin had made it such. And, for sin to be silenced, the only answer was in Jesus flesh and blood, was at the end of this road to Calvary and the new and better garden of the tomb from which new life would be created, as the new and better Adam was born from the belly of the earth. Hard words are all Jesus could speak, hardened in His desire to save you, and hard words, even though our doubts would tell us otherwise, are the only honest one when it comes to matters of sin and death, life and salvation.

Well, at least we have a choice in the matter. At least we can sit back and weigh the words and decide if this Jesus will be our Jesus, if this God will be our God. Oops. No we don’t! God grabs us. The Father kidnaps us and take us to His kid, His Son. No one can come to Jesus unless the Father gives it. And, when He gives it, He gives it, so that we wretches who so often long for easy words, for easy paths, for pretty Jesus, can’t help but squirm, yet remain nonetheless. It is a miracle each of you keeps coming back. Think of all you’ve endured. Think

of all you've accepted by faith, even when it seemed absurd. Think of all the foolishness that has made sense, even when your every being cried for it not to. You've been taken hold of. The Son has been given to you. So, sorry, hard Jesus with the hard words is your Jesus. Live with it, because there is no life without it. It is true God or no god, true Jesus or no Jesus, death on the cross or death in hell, life from the tomb or death in hell.

The only way for trembling sinners and doubting disciples is the same way Jesus now must walk. Even now He knows who will leave Him, who will betray Him. The only way is the way to the flesh and blood of God offered for the flesh and blood of the world. The only way for trembling sinners and doubting disciples is the way to the cross. The only rest is in the wounds of Christ, which quieted Thomas' grumblings and which quiet our questions as well. Do you suffer? He suffers. Do you face death? He faced death. Have you lost a child? His Father lost a child. Have you been forsaken? He was forsaken. Not easy answers, but hard answers. There is nowhere you can go, nothing you can endure, where He has not gone, which He has not endured for you. He knows you, even when you don't know yourself. He is Jesus. He is no other Jesus but the One He was born to be: your Jesus.

"Lord, to whom shall we go, for you have the words of everlasting life." Few may remain, but they are the few who are with Jesus. Few may praise the words of Jesus as the words of eternal life, but they are the few who have eternal life. It may not sound like much at times, but it is more than all the world. Grab onto these hard words of our Savior hardened in love and obstinate in grace and never let go. Treasure them, even when they seem perplexing. Rest in them, even when the answer is hard, or slow in coming. The Christian life is not always fair, is not always fun, is not always easy, because it is the Christian life, built on Jesus Christ. Amen.