

We can see the finish line.

This is our fifth and final week in the sixth chapter of John. We have been thoroughly immersed into the teachings of Jesus about the “Bread of Life”. In this chapter we have seen individuals complaining and fighting. It continues this week. This time, the complaint comes from the disciples and ends in a form of a question. Last week, we leaned in on that John has a historian and theologian loved using questions.

The disciples finally speak up and they are honest with Jesus. They say, “This is tough teaching, too tough to swallow.” Then, they follow it up with a question:

“Who can accept it?”

By now, we should know that Jesus does not always answer the specific question that they ask. In fact, in this circumstance, Jesus begins his answer by two questions. They are the following:

- “Does this rattle you completely?”
- “What would happen if you saw the Son of Man ascending to where he came from?”

In these questions, Jesus is beginning to probe the disciples into a deeper thinking and wrestling with the issues that are churning inside them. For you see, the disciples were in conflict with themselves and what they were wrestling with was the following:

“What does it mean to believe?”

John, in my opinion, takes a different approach to this question.

For John, he is sharing with his readers that God makes belief possible; however, humans are still required to accept it. Thus, belief for John is like a crossroads. The crossroad is the intersection of God’s grace and human free will.

In this chapter, we see that there are many because of their free will choose to not accept. Jesus knows this and he speaks rather bluntly to them when he says, “some of you are resisting, refusing to have any part in this.” I have always wondered what the crowd’s reactions were when he said this. Did Jesus read their body language? Did he see the anger in their eyes? The reason that I wonder this is because Jesus then continues with one more sentence:

“This is why I told you earlier that no one is capable of coming to me on his own. You get to me only as a gift from the Father.”

When Jesus said this, the scriptures tell us that the crowd had enough of Jesus. The free meals were not even enough of a reason to stick around. They left Jesus and not only that, they wanted nothing to do with him and disassociated with him.

Everyone seems to disappear, except the twelve. So, Jesus looks at them and says, “Do you also want to leave?” Here is their chance. They can now freely choose to walk away. They have the free will to choose what will they choose?

Good ole’ Peter. He steps up to the plate and answers the question for all of the disciples with a profound statement of faith and belief. He says, “Master, to whom would we go? You have the words of real life, eternal life. We’ve already committed ourselves, confident that you are the Holy One of God.”

Peter’s words almost echo the words of our first reading when Joshua stated: “As for me and my family, we’ll worship God.”

So, I think we have a choice.

Will we choose to follow Jesus or will we get upset with the teachings of Jesus and turn away?

Will we choose to abide in Jesus or be drawn into one of the million alternatives that we can choose?

Can I be honest with you for a brief moment? The other options that you may choose may offer short-term satisfaction that is greater than spending an hour inside this building with PJ leading. However, I truly believe ALL of those options do not offer long-term redemption. Jesus can offer you long-term redemption and we, as a church, can travel the road together offering each other support and encouragement.

Before I bring this sermon to a conclusion, I want to spend a minute or two on the second question that I asked. There was a specific reason that I used the word abide. Abide is not a word that we use too often.

The simple definition of abide is the following:

“To accept or act in accordance with”

Abide is a key concept in the Gospel of John. Matter of fact, John uses it the most. I am not sure if you will every engage in bible trivia but here are some trivia facts for you.

The word translated as abide is “meno”. It is a verb and it can be translated as abide, dwell or remain.

John uses the term thirty-four times in his Gospel. This is three times more than the other three Gospels combined.

Why is that?

Maybe, the theologians who followed John the Theologian are speculating; but, it could be that John is intrigued by exploring the mystery and complexity of God becoming flesh and us as a church spending five-weeks living into the Bread of Life.

In Christ, we see the fullness of God expressed in the fullness of Christ, the human. Now, that is a tough concept to understand and why this section opens up with this teaching is difficult Jesus.

So, abiding is used more because it is not simply about having this intellectual understanding. It is about dwelling into Jesus. Because of Jesus and the Eucharist, we are also able to live at the crossroads. We can rest in the intersection of human and divine.

We can live out our human lives as God is lived out in us.

Once again, in a few minutes, we will have the opportunity to come to the Table. In the Lutheran tradition, we call it the Eucharist.

The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. We come to Christ and we express our gratitude for the gift that we have received. And when we gather at this table to express our gratitude for the life we have been given, it should not just a five-minute isolated act that we carry out this week. Instead, it should be the center point of our lives. We are made holy here at this table.

We come because we have heard Christ’s call and we want to abide in him, and to open ourselves to him so that he might abide in us. We come because the Word has become flesh, and through word and flesh we will find life in all its fullness.

May we have the courage to live our lives to the fullness.