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13th Sunday a. Trinity
September 6, 2009
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: John 6:60-69 *Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" Then Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Theme: "TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?"

How a believer and unbeliever view the Word of God

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

Let me tell you about Sam. Sam grew up in the Lutheran Church. As a child he attended a Christian Day School and was confirmed in the Christian faith. As a teenager he even attended a Lutheran High School. As Paul writes to Timothy so it was with Sam - ***"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*** (2 Tim 3:15) From his childhood on Sam was surrounded by the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sam, was the type of guy who never dated much and never thought he would get married, but did find a girl who spent time with him and he married her. Things from the beginning were not good between Sam and his new bride. She had become pregnant before they got married. Over the course of the next four years they had two more children. But also during those four years his wife cheated on him two times - that he knew of. He was pretty sure she had cheated on him more. As Sam faced this crisis in his life he didn't know where to go for help and direction. He didn't know who he could trust for advice on what to do. He loved this woman dearly and the years he spent with her were the best years of his life. But how could he trust her as his wife and mother of their children?

This is something that thousands of people face each and every day. People want to make the right decisions, but often do not know what to base their decisions on. To the unbeliever the right decision is to do what feels good at the time - what will please their flesh. Is that what we are to base our decisions on? What feels good at the time? Whom shall we turn in good times and in bad? Whom shall we turn to for advice in our day to day dealings with each other and our neighbor? Whom shall we turn to for direction in our lives? Our theme for this morning is

based on the question of Peter in our text, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” May God the Holy Spirit be with us and bless us through His Word.

We have a rather striking and sad statement in verse 66 of our text, don’t we. **“From that time many of his disciples went back and walked with (Jesus) no more.”** What did Jesus do? What did He say that would cause a large number of His followers to **“walk with Him no more”**?! If they weren’t walking with Jesus, following Him, who were they following?

To understand better the events that take place in our text, we need to remind ourselves of all that has taken place in John chapter 6. The chapter begins with Jesus feeding the 5,000 with only five loads of bread and two fish. This miraculous feast did not merely feed everyone present until they were full, but there were even twelve baskets full of leftovers afterwards! That night John records the event depicted on our altar - Jesus walking on water. That next morning when the people realized that Jesus and the Twelve Disciples had gone to the other side of the Sea of Galilee they made their way over to find Him.

Now you would think this would be a good thing. After all what preacher does not want a large following?! Furthermore we would rejoice to hear that a large crowd was searching for Jesus! It would seem that they thought the same thing as Peter - “Who else can we go to, but Jesus?” But why? WHY were they searching and going after Jesus? Jesus knew what was in their hearts and why they had come to find Him. In 6:26 we read, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”** They sought Jesus because He filled their bellies. They were searching for Jesus because they thought He was their bread king who would make their lives easy.

What Jesus saw in their hearts became evident as Jesus preached to them. He talked to them about how He is better than the manna that their ancestors ate in the wilderness. Jesus told the crowds, **“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”** (6:51) Jesus had come to give His life as a ransom for the sin of the whole world. Unless a man spiritually consume Jesus, that is believe in Him, He will not be saved. What Jesus was telling them were the basics of the Christian faith.

But listen to how the crowd reacts to the words of Jesus in the first verse of our text, **“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”** Literally they said that Jesus’ words were harsh, unpleasant and hard to take. These words were an offense to them, they were a stumbling block. This is not why they came searching for Jesus. They did not have a desire to hear that Jesus had to give His life to save them from their sins. They did not want to hear that the Son of God had to leave heaven and become man to save them. They were not there to hear that they were sinners whom only the Son of God could save. They were not interested in hearing about sin and grace. They were there searching for Jesus because He had filled their bellies. He had served their flesh and they wanted Him to continue to serve their flesh. They had no desire to hear of the thing of the Kingdom of God.

This then resulted in the words of verse 66, **“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”** Their actions demonstrated exactly what was in their heart. They searched for Jesus because they thought He was going to fulfill all of their physical needs. But once Jesus began speaking about meeting their spiritual needs, they wanted nothing to do with Him. So if they were walking with Jesus no more, where did they go? “To whom shall we go?” They would move on to someone else who would promise meet the needs physical

needs.

“The flesh profits nothing,” Jesus told the crowd. Their flesh was not satisfied with the Gospel Jesus preached to them. The flesh is never satisfied. The flesh never has enough - it always wants more. An alcoholic always wants more alcohol. A drug addict always wants more drugs. A sex fiend always wants more sex. Serving the flesh profits nothing. These bread lovers wanted more free bread from Jesus, not these hard sayings.

We see that in 2,000 years not much has changed. There are many who speak well of Jesus and His ways, until they hear what Jesus teaches in His Word. When they hear that Jesus says it is wrong for a couple to live together outside of marriage, they turn away and no longer want to walk with Jesus. As long as their bellies and bank accounts are full, they have no problem following Jesus. But when they hear that, ***“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God,”*** (Acts 14:22) they want no part of that Jesus. They are interested in only having their physical needs met. The moment you get into doctrine and Jesus as the only way to eternal life, many turn away and walk with Jesus no more.

After many of His followers were offended and followed Him no more, Jesus turned to the Twelve disciples and said to them, ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** To which Peter replies, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*** Peter’s reply to Jesus is very emphatic. ***“Who else can we go to, Lord? You and You alone have the words of eternal life.”*** These are the words of the Christian faith. This is not because Peter had “accepted Jesus in his heart” or “chosen Jesus to be his Savior.” Peter’s confession was the result of God’s grace. Jesus declares in our text, ***“Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”*** Peter believed in Jesus not because Peter had chosen him, but because God had chosen Peter. Solely by His grace God had called Peter to faith.

God had used the very same Word that offended the other disciples and caused them to turn away from Jesus to create faith in Peter’s heart. Through the Word of Jesus the Holy Spirit had created spiritual life in the heart of Peter. ***“It is the Spirit who gives life,”*** Jesus told them, ***“the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life.”*** The very words that those unbelievers were stumbling over are the very words gives life to the heart of the believer now in time and hereafter in eternity. Faith that believes and knows that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. Faith which knows and believes that Jesus is the only answer for sin. Faith which knows and believes that Jesus is the living bread sent from heaven. By the grace of God working in the heart of Peter, he knew that there was nowhere else for him to go than to Jesus.

This morning we have been blessed to hear Greg confess this very thing. God has worked and sustained faith in Greg’s heart. Greg believes that only Jesus has the words of eternal life. With Peter and all Christians, Greg knows and believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Greg believes that our church preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He desired to become a member of this church because here he can hear the words of Jesus which are spirit and life. Here is faith is nourished and strengthen through the Word and as he comes to the Lord’s Table to receive His body and blood.

This morning we also installed our Sunday School teachers for the coming year. We have Sunday School because we know that the words of Jesus that are spirit and life and we want our children to hear these words too. We want our children to know and believe the very thing that

Peter and Greg know and believe. We want them to know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to save them. We want them to know and believe that Jesus died on the cross to take away all of their sins. We want them to know and believe that Jesus rose from the dead to give them the victory over death and the promise of eternal life. We want them to know that Jesus is the only person to go to and firmly ground their faith upon now in this life and into eternity.

“Lord, to whom shall we go?” Quite a question isn’t it. As Sam’s world was falling apart he didn’t know where to go. Though he had been brought up in the church, he had begun to drift away from the church. Where would you direct Sam? Where else can we go to be assured that all of our sins have been atoned for? Where else can we go to be assured that every last one of our sins has been taken away? Where else can we go to be assured that we are going to heaven? Where else can we go than to Jesus and His Word. No where. Jesus and Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. He alone can calm our consciences and assure us that we are at peace with God. Jesus alone can aid us as we face the storms of this life, as Sam was facing with his unfaithful wife. Jesus alone is pleading for us before the Throne of the Heavenly Father. His words and only His words are spirit, and they are life. Therefore we pray, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*** Amen.