

Joshua 29:14-18

John 6:56-69

Ephesians 6:10-20

“Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord to whom shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.” AMEN!

I love it when we stumble across  
Biblical text that is familiar to us  
in our liturgy.

You recognize that tune and those words.

They have been used to introduce  
the gospel reading for many years and  
continue to do just that.

This is where those writers got it!  
Chapter 6:68.

It wasn't just pulled out of the air somewhere.

It's an example of how the way  
we worship is grounded in Jesus' witness.

But before we get to a place where  
we might answer that question,  
“Lord, to whom shall we go?”

We need to finish the last two  
verses of the section that were not included  
in our gospel this morning.

After Simon Peter said, “Lord to who shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life.”

He then pledged that he and the other disciples  
have come to believe and know that Jesus is  
the Holy One of God.

Jesus answered him in verse 70 and 71.

Jesus replied, “Did I not choose you, the twelve?

Yet, one of you is a devil.”

He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot,  
for he, though one of the twelve, was  
going to betray him.”

The Gospel of the Lord.  
“Praise to you O Christ.”

We need to finish that scene out to its  
conclusion because there is an issue at play  
in John we might not know about.

That issue is about election and choice.

Does God elect us or do we choose?

We heard last week how the Temple leaders  
and authorities argued against Jesus' claim  
that he was the Living Bread come down  
from heaven.

We have also railed against his words of  
eating his flesh and drinking his blood  
finding them hard to swallow.

Now Jesus responds to complaints  
about his teaching.

We find, today,  
in the conclusion of Jesus'  
"Bread of Life Discourse"

that there are a range of responses  
that people can give or make to  
the invitation Jesus offers.

Even though there is election we also  
have a choice to make.

The first one I have mentioned already.

We can complain about it.

Oh my gosh, do I know this one!  
"Why me, God?"

“Why do I have to \_\_\_\_\_?”

You fill in the blank.

Some might complain about  
Jesus’ open door policy.

About his loving our enemy command;  
his shocking words of eating and drinking  
flesh and blood.

We might not complain that Jesus was  
not a blond hair blue eyed man, but  
many people do or that he hung around  
with the less than savory members of  
the community.

We complain when we don’t get our  
clear purpose written in the sky for us.

One of the ways we respond to Jesus  
is that we can’t stop complaining.

Another response is rejection.

We read that many of Jesus’ disciples turned back  
and no longer went about with him.

That means they rejected his call to be disciples.

Now I do not believe that they rejected him  
simply over his “Bread of Life” speech.

I do believe it had a lot to do with  
his unwillingness to waiver in his calling from God.

He was going to offend them.

In action and teaching but even worse...  
Jesus was going to need to leave them.

That was too much...

It changed some who were  
grumbling or complaining to be  
just plain deserters.

Why should they endure, follow and  
promote all of this tough teaching when  
Jesus was going to leave them?

They hastily made their choice but they  
didn't know the full story.

They didn't know or want to let themselves know  
more about this teaching, purpose and  
about what might happen when

Jesus returned to God.

They had made up their mind and decided  
to cut off the conversation with Jesus  
because his teachings were too hard.

We can relate.

It is why we get caught up in human leaders  
and into political divides forgetting or  
ignoring Jesus' teachings.

Politicians tell us and their base supporters  
what we want to hear.

Jesus tells what we need to hear and  
wants us to know that he can and will leave us.

It hurts to know that.

Yet, John's gospel does not  
give us an easy way out.

And when there's no easy way out what  
is the third response to Jesus?

Betrayal.

But betrayal in John is not "handing over"

betrayal like in the synoptic gospels:  
Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In John, “Betrayal” is disbelief.

Jesus cannot be who He claims to be.

His teaching is too difficult so I will  
just discount Him, strip Him of identity.  
source and walk away - unbelieving.

And this is where Judas was named as the one  
who would specifically betray Jesus.

He was elected as one of the twelve and  
still had the freewill choice;

a response from him was required because  
the world was already under judgment and  
this new life that God offered through Jesus  
needs to be accepted.

If Judas encountered unbelief and he was  
one of the elected 12, then we need to be  
aware that is a response that we can make,  
too. (Pause)

That’s what is put before us, today.

What will our response be?

Complaining, rejection or disbelief?

We are encouraged to not choose any of them,  
but chances are we have tasted each one.

Jesus asked, “Do you also wish to go away?”

We respond with gospel acclamation,  
“Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord to who shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.”

It is as simple as that, but also  
far from easy because we need to  
consciously make the choice everyday.

In morning prayer these words start us off:

You have been born anew, through the  
living and abiding word of God.  
You are blessed, raised up to shine on those  
who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

John’s gospel does not let its readers off easy.

We might read this text and want to say  
with Peter and the twelve that we would  
be there to continue to follow Jesus.

To be rock-solid and counted among the saints  
unto the very end.

Or we may want to recognize that  
it is okay to doubt, when it is  
honest and humble.

After all, Peter made grand declarations  
about Jesus but later will not make  
the best discipleship choices.

Or maybe there is another understanding.

Maybe belief and unbelief that we claim on our lips  
is not really the point.

That it is more about authenticity in our fellowship  
that is what's important to Jesus in John.

When Jesus called his first disciples  
he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

To another who had been sick for 38 years  
he asked, "Do you want to be made well?"

When he was surrounded and about  
to be arrested, Jesus asked,  
"Whom are you looking for?"

Maybe it is not whether we believe or  
struggle with unbelief but instead a question  
from Jesus, “What is it I desire?”

In the end of this gospel, Jesus will bring  
Peter back by asking three times,  
“Do you love me?”

Now that is not too hard of a teaching is it?

“Love the one who in love for you sacrificed himself  
for the life of the world.

Dwell in the one who dwells in you and  
believe in the truth you have heard.”

AMEN!