

OUR GOSPEL READING TODAY,, BRINGS TO A CLOSE,, WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY ABOUT HIMSELF,, AS HE IDENTIFIED WHO HE WAS,, AND WHERE HE CAME FROM. IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT,, A CHURCH THAT GROWS FROM A DOZEN MEMBERS,, TO MORE THAN 5000 IN JUST 3 YEARS !!! WOW !!! NOW THAT'S GROWTH,, ISN'T IT? THEY HAVE STURDY LEADERS,, EAGER MEMBERS AND
A FANTASTIC PREACHER!

MIRACLES HAPPEN EVERY DAY AND JUST ABOUT EVERYONE IN THE COUNTRY,, IS TALKING ABOUT IT! THEN ONE MORNING,, AFTER THAT FANTASTIC PREACHER GIVES ONE SHORT SERMON..... *BOOM!*** THE CONGREGATION ALMOST IMMEDIATELY,, DROPS FROM 5000 PLUS,, TO ***THE ORIGINAL 12.*****

WELL,, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS,, IN TODAY'S GOSPEL,, THAT THE DEACON READ TO US!

JESUS HAD DEVELOPED A HUGE FOLLOWING,, SO HUGE THAT HIS CONGREGATION GREW TO THE POINT THAT NO SINGLE BUILDING COULD HOLD THEM.

ALL 4 GOSPELS,, MATTHEW,, MARK,, LUKE & JOHN,, DESCRIBE ONE MEETING,, WHERE JESUS FED 5000 MEN,, NOT COUNTING THE MORE THAN 10,000 WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

AFTER SEEING THAT,, THE PEOPLE JUST WANTED TO SNATCH JESUS UP,, MAKE HIM THEIR EARTHLY KING AND MARCH HIM INTO JERUSALEM,, IN A HUGE VICTORY PARADE.

THAT'S WHEN JESUS ALONG WITH HIS DISCIPLES,, LEFT AND SAILED A BOAT TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. BUT THE PEOPLE WERE DETERMINED AND TRACKED JESUS DOWN.

INSTEAD OF FEEDING THEM BREAKFAST,, JESUS PREACHED A SHORT SERMON,, WHERE HE SAID:

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE".

THE PEOPLE WERE "BEWILDERED",, THEIR STOMACHS WERE GROWLING,, THEIR MOUTHS WATERING. THEY WERE HUNGRY,, AND THEY WANTED BREAD AND FISH!

SO,,, JUST WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID;

“I AM THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN!”

OUR GOSPEL READING TODAY,,, BRINGS TO A CLOSE,,, WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY ABOUT HIMSELF,,, AND THE PEOPLE HAD **“A HARD TIME”** UNDERSTANDING WHAT JESUS MEANT BY HIS STATEMENT.

FOR SEVERAL WEEKS,,, WE’VE STUDIED THE WRITINGS OF JOHN IN CHAPTER 6,,, AND THE REALITY OF;

THESE WORDS OF JESUS:

“I AM THE LIVING BREAD,,, THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. WHOEVER EATS THIS BREAD,,, WILL LIVE FOREVER AND THE BREAD THAT I GIVE,,, IS MY FLESH,,, FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER EATS MY FLESH AND DRINKS MY BLOOD,,, HAS ETERNAL LIFE AND I WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY. WHOEVER EATS MY FLESH AND DRINKS MY BLOOD,,, REMAINS IN ME,,, AND I IN HIM”.

THIS DECLARATION OF JESUS,,, REALLY UPSET THE CROWD AND THEY STARTED MURMURING AND GRUMBLING. AS THE DAY WENT ON,,, MANY,,, IF NOT MOST OF THEM SIMPLY,,,

“QUIT FOLLOWING JESUS” OR ***“QUIT THE CHURCH”***.

EVEN MANY OF THE 70 DISCIPLES THAT JESUS HAD SENT OUT AS HIS MISSIONARIES,,, LEFT HIM. SO,,, WHEN JESUS LOOKED AROUND,,, AT THE END OF THE DAY,,,

ONLY HIS ORIGINAL 12 REMAINED!

TODAY,,, WHEN YOU ASK PEOPLE,,, ABOUT THEIR OWN UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS,,, THERE ARE ABOUT AS MANY IDEAS,,, AS THERE ARE PEOPLE.

FOR SOME,,, THEY SEE,,,

THE ***“MEEK AND MILD JESUS”***! YOU KNOW,,, THE JESUS THAT WOULDN’T HURT ANYONE.

THEN THERE IS THE ***“SPIRITED JESUS”*** THIS IS THE JESUS WHO WALKS THROUGH THE WHEAT FIELDS AND PICKS GRAIN ***“ON THE SABBATH”***,,, HEALS THE SICK ***“ON THE SABBATH”***,,, REBUKES THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS,,, EATS & DRINKS WITH SINNERS,,, OVERTURNS TABLES,,, MAKES A WHIP AND WITH IT,,, HE CHASES THE MONEY CHANGERS AND ANIMALS OUT OF THE TEMPLE.

AND IT WAS JESUS,,, WHO ALSO TALKS ABOUT SENSITIVE THINGS LIKE SIN,,, UNBELIEF,,, DEMONS,,, DARKNESS,,, JUDGEMENT AND ABOUT HELL ITSELF!

BUT,,, AFTER ALL THIS,,, JESUS OFFERED THEM AND US,,, A WAY OF ESCAPE,,, REDEMPTION,,, SALVATION AND LIFE,,, *IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD*,,, THROUGH A *RADICAL FAITH*,,, AND THROUGH A *“CONVERSION OF HEART!”*

BUT THAT’S ALSO THE PROBLEM BROTHERS AND SISTERS. WHEN THE REAL JESUS STANDS BEFORE US,,, NOT OUR PERCEPTION OF HIM,,, WE HEAR HIM SAY: *“I AM THE WAY,,, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE,,, NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER,,, EXCEPT THROUGH ME,,, AND UNLESS YOU EAT AND DRINK OF MY BODY AND BLOOD,,, YOU HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU.”*

THIS STATEMENT,,, SHOULD MAKE US THINK,,, A LOT,,, JUST LIKE IT DID FOR JESUS’ DISCIPLES!

MANY OF THE DISCIPLES WERE MURMURING AND SAID: *“THIS IS A HARD TEACHING! WHO CAN ACCEPT IT? OR RECEIVE IT?”*

THE ISSUE ALWAYS IS,,, WHETHER OR NOT,,, WE’RE WILLING TO TAKE JESUS,,, FOR WHO HE IS,,, AND WHAT HE SAYS!

OR,,, DO WE DO AS THE WORLD DESIRES,,, AND BUNDLE JESUS UP,,, TO SUIT THEIR OWN CONCEPTS?

SOME PEOPLE PREFER *THE SOFT,,, MEEK AND MILD* JESUS,,, AND OTHERS,,, WANT A DIFFERENT TYPE OF TEACHER,,, ONE WHO’S *NOT TOO DEMANDING*,,, JUST A SORT OF *“MIDDLE OF THE ROAD”* TEACHER.

THE SIMPLE FACT IS THIS,,, WHAT JESUS SAYS,,, *IS DEMANDING* AND IT *IS DIFFICULT!* JESUS SAYS; *“COME AND FOLLOW ME,,, TAKE UP YOUR CROSS OF SELF DENIAL,,, DIE TO SELF,,, BE CONFORMED TO MY LIKENESS,,, LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT’S GUIDANCE,,, SUBMIT TO HIS SANCTIFYING WORK WITHIN YOU.”*

JESUS IS ASKING THESE QUESTIONS;
WHO IS GOING TO GET INTIMATELY,,, PERSONALLY,,, LOVINGLY INVOLVED WITH ME? WHO IS GOING TO ACCEPT MY FATHER’S INVITATION,,, TO COME AND DINE WITH ME,,, AND EAT MY FLESH,,, AND DRINK MY BLOOD?

SURE,,, THESE ***ARE HARD SAYINGS!*** SO,,, ARE YOU GOING TO ACCEPT THEM?

AS I SAID EARLIER,,, A LARGE NUMBER OF JESUS' DISCIPLES WERE OFFENDED AND THEY JUST WALKED AWAY. THEY JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT. THEY ABANDONED JESUS! THEY COULDN'T ACCEPT WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY,,, SO,,, THEY WENT BACK TO THEIR OLD WAYS OF LIFE!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, ***WHEN JESUS SPEAKS,,, AND WHEN THE WORD OF GOD,,, IN THE SCRIPTURES,,, SPEAKS TO US,,, WE NEED TO BE PREPARED TO BE CHANGED,,, TO BE CHALLENGED,,, AND TO GROW SPIRITUALLY!***

(HEBREWS 4:12) SAYS;

FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE. SHARPER THAN ANY DOUBLE EDGED SWORD. IT PENETRATES EVEN THE DIVIDING OF THE SOUL AND SPIRIT,,, JOINTS AND MARROW. IT JUDGES THE THOUGHTS OF THE HEART."

JESUS,,, BEING FULLY AWARE,,, THAT THE DISCIPLES WERE COMPLAINING,,, SAID; "***DOES THIS OFFEND YOU?***" WHAT WERE THEY COMPLAINING ABOUT?

WERE THEY COMPLAINING ABOUT JESUS' EXCLUSIVENESS THAT THE FATHER HAD SENT JESUS,,, AND THAT IT WAS THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS ALONE,,, THAT THE FATHER DREW PEOPLE TO HIMSELF"

NOW,,, IF YOU'LL REMEMBER,,, IN AN EARLIER GOSPEL READING,,, JESUS SAID:

NO ONE COMES TO ME,,, UNLESS THE FATHER DRAWS HIM.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, CHRISTIANITY IS EXCLUSIVE!

(*) SO,,, DOES THAT MESSAGE OFFEND YOU?

(*) DOES IT TROUBLE YOU THAT SCRIPTURE SAYS:

"THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN,,, WHEREBY MEN MUST BE SAVED?"

THE REAL STRUGGLE IN ALL OUR CHURCHES TODAY,,, IS NOT DENOMINATIONALISM,,, OR EVEN THE MANY DIFFERENT WORSHIP STYLES!

THE REAL STRUGGLE IN CHURCHES TODAY,,, BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, IS UNDERSTANDING;

WHO JESUS IS,,, IN THE CHURCH?

- (*) IS HE THE WORD THAT WAS WITH GOD?
- (*) THE WORD THAT IS GOD?
- (*) THE WORD THAT BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US?
- (*) IS HE THE LORD OF OUR LIVES?
- (*) OR,, IS HE JUST SOME NICE,,, MELLOW,,, HISTORICAL TEACHER,,, ALONG WITH ALL THE REST?

WHEN JESUS SPOKE; A LARGE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES LEFT HIM,,, BECAUSE *IT REQUIRED COMITTMENT*.

IT WAS *INCONVENIENT* THE COST WAS SIMPLY TO HIGH!
JESUS TURNED AND ASKED THE PENETRATING QUESTION TO THE 12 DISCIPLES;

ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE TOO?

THIS TIME,,, OLD BLUNDERING PETER GOT IT RIGHT!
WITH POWERFUL WORDS OF FAITH,,, PETER SAID;
LORD,,, TO WHOM CAN WE GO? YOU HAVE THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. WE HAVE COME TO BELIEVE,,, AND ARE CONVINCED,,, THAT YOU ARE THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, *NOT ONE OF US,,, ON OUR OWN,,, IS GOOD ENOUGH TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS!*

THE ONLY WAY,,, TO HAVE THE HEART OF A TRUE DISCIPLE,,, IS TO GIVE OF YOURSELF,,, HEART AND SOUL,,, TO JESUS CHRIST,,, TO HAVE FAITH IN HIM,,, TO TRUST HIM AND TO BE ABSOLUTLY CONVINCED IN YOUR BELIEF IN JESUS.

OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH DOESN'T JUST "*HAPPEN*" OVERNIGHT! WE,,, "*ARE WORKS IN PROGRESS*".

WE HAVE TO BE DETERMINED,,, TO STAY WITH JESUS AND TRUST IN HIM,,, EVEN TO STRUGGLE WITH WHAT HE HAS TO TEACH US,,, BECAUSE BROTHERS AND SISTER,,,

**JESUS ALONE,,,
HAS THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE!**

*I BLESS YOU ALL,,,
THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT*

+++ AMEN+++

(1,395) WDS,,, 5 PGS