

Today is the last Sunday that we hear about Jesus as the bread of life. And as we listen to Jesus talking the Apostle John points out two different reactions of Jesus' disciples. We're going to take a look at these two groups today and see what we can learn from their behavior.

We are the disciples of Jesus as well. The only difference is that we're not in Capernaum right now listening directly to Jesus speaking, but we're in Robesonia listening to Jesus' words being read to us. But they are still the very same words. And just as it was with Jesus' disciples then, it is the same with us. We too react to Jesus' words in two different ways.

And so for the last time we go back to Jesus' speech where he talks about himself being the bread of life. Once again we hear together with all of Jesus' disciples those uncompromising words: *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life. Stop grumbling among yourselves. 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

What comes to your mind, as you hear these words? Perhaps you're thinking: *"This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"* These were the exact words of some of Jesus' disciples. How many times did we think or even say these very same words? We all did it at some point, for Jesus' words sometimes come off as difficult. And then instead of fully embracing his words trying to understand them and believe in them we come up with excuses. *"That was then and this is now. That's not what Jesus meant. He's talking symbolically here, and he knows that there are other priorities in my life..."*

And this is just a beginning which leads to very obvious consequences. Objections create doubt, doubt creates unbelief and if we don't believe anymore why are we still here? That's what happened with many of Jesus' disciples. We hear in today's Gospel reading Jesus' words: *"But among you there are some who do not believe."* And then we read that because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.

But then there was another group of disciples, who were there with Jesus. They listened to his words as well, day by day as they walked with him. And when Jesus asked them: *"Do you also wish to go away?"* Simon Peter answered: *"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."* When you hear this answer you have to ask yourself what kind of words were they listening to if they said: *"You have the words of eternal life?"* How can one group of disciples say: *"This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?"* while the other group that heard the very same words says: *"You have the words of eternal life."*

Well Jesus says: *"That no one can come to him unless it is granted by the Father."* Does that mean that some are predestined to be saved while others not? No, that's not the case, for we know that Jesus came for the whole world, not just the chosen few. Everyone is invited into his

kingdom. It's just that when it comes to his word, which Jesus says is Spirit and life, we tend to miss the complete message, we tend to ignore parts of it, or we simply reject it, for there are other things in our lives that take priority.

For the truth is that as we hear Jesus' words in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, we can hear two different things. We can hear Jesus telling us: *"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life!"* Or we can hear Jesus say: *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* We can hear Jesus telling us: *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."* Or we can hear him say: *"anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; and I will raise them up on the last day."*

See as we listen to Jesus' words we hear two different messages in it. The message of the Law which sometimes sounds harsh, and accuses us of our human imperfection, sin and unfaithfulness and calls us to repentance and then there is the message of the Gospel, which tells us of God's forgiveness, his unfailing love and with this message of love it sends us out with joy as forgiven sinners to serve Christ.

Now we can hear the first message of the law, and feel bad about ourselves and feel discouraged like the first group of disciples which left him. Or we can hear both of these inseparable messages, the Law and the Gospel and we can rejoice in the gift of the new beginning given to us in Christ Jesus. We can rejoice in the Spirit of life which works through us. We can joyfully accept that invitation by our heavenly Father to belong to Christ.

See God has already done everything that needed to be done. He loved us so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. We can say with Peter: *"Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."* (pause)

But the truth is that most of the time we're a part of that first group of disciples. The group that left in unbelief. Just look at our lives, and the places we go to seek help, refuge, wisdom or comfort before we come to our God? Just think of our daily schedules, and the amount of time we spend with Jesus, reading his word, talking to him in prayer, praising him for all his blessings. If we think about it, we spend very little time with Jesus, and our lives don't reflect his Spirit of life but rather the flesh and the food that spoils.

And every day, Jesus asks us the very same question: *"Do you also wish to go away?"* And every day we think to ourselves: Lord, I'm going away, but I'll be right back, let me just take care of this and that... But the world out there is a dangerous world, whether we like it or not, and the more we deny it, the more we're making our biggest enemy Satan happy. We're out there by ourselves, without God, losing one battle after another.

But that's not what Jesus wants for us. He wants to be there with us, not just whenever we decide, but all the time. The invitation is here, it remains the same: "*I am the bread of life. Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.*" (pause) There was a reason why one group of disciples didn't leave, why they replied with words: "*Lord to whom can we go...*"

My prayer is that in the next couple days we reevaluate our relationship with Christ. That we recommit to take his word and actually read it, that we'll spend time in prayer, asking for forgiveness, new life and guidance. That we'll make him again the center of our lives and rediscover what those words: "*Lord to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" truly mean for us.

Amen