

# Jesus Only Has the Words of Life

**John 6:51-69 NKJ** <sup>51</sup> "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." <sup>52</sup> The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this *Man* give us *His* flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup> "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup> "This is the bread which came down from heaven-- not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup> These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. <sup>60</sup> Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" <sup>61</sup> When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> "*What* then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup> "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. <sup>64</sup> "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. <sup>65</sup> 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." <sup>66</sup> From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. <sup>67</sup> Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" <sup>68</sup> But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Things that are hard:

The fundamental theorem of calculus is hard for a lot of people to understand. It describes the relationship between differentiation and integration.

There is a rock known as Jacob's pillow in Becket, Massachusetts. It is not the actual rock that Jacob slept on but it would be hard to sleep on.

A physics lecture at Princeton university lead by Duncan Halden. This is something that might be hard to listen to because it is hard to understand.

Fingernails on a chalk board are also hard to listen to. This would not be hard to understand but it would be hard to listen to.

The NKJ translates **John 6:60** "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

This gives the impression that the Jews turn away from Jesus because he is like a physics lecturer. They have a hard time understanding him.

The ESV is probably the more accurate when it translates **John 6:60** "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

This gives the correct impression that the Jews turn away from Jesus because his words are like fingernails on a blackboard, or like Michael Scott from the office. They are hard to listen to because the things he says are unpleasant.

The Greek word here σκληρός, means rough, hard, unpleasant. Like sandpaper grating against your skin so are Jesus words against the ears of the Jews. They don't want to hear it.

It is true that they have some difficult understanding Jesus. Last Sunday we read through the earlier verses of this text, where the Jews keep asking Jesus to repeat himself. This is why John chapter 6 is 71 verses long, because Jesus has to keep explaining himself. However, the Jews don't turn their backs on Jesus and leave him earlier when they don't understand him. They turn their backs and leave him now when they finally do understand him and don't like what he is saying.

Notice in verse 61 he says, **John 6:61** "He said to them, "Does this offend you?"

He does not say to them does this confuse you but does this offend you. The problem is not a lack of understanding but a dislike for what they hear. Jesus' words are offensive to them.

The words of Jesus do indeed offend many people, to many people his words are fingernails on a chalk board.

How many people have left this very church not because they didn't understand what the pastor was saying but because they didn't like what the pastor was saying? It may be that sometimes the pastor was wrong or misleading, but I think more often the pastor was correctly teaching God's word and some simply are simply not willing to hear what God's word says. Even to us what scripture says is often a pill hard to swallow.

So what are we going to say? What are we going to say to those who want to turn away? What are we going to say to ourselves when are tempted to walk away because we do not like what Jesus has to say?

Well thankfully we don't have to come up with an answer ourselves the Holy Spirit gives us the best answer through the words of Peter.

**John 6:68** Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Peter does not argue that Jesus words are without bitterness. Peter does not pretend that he understands Jesus words better than the Jews. Jesus words are often difficult for the disciples to understand. They often take him aside and ask him to explain. The disciples sometimes don't like what Jesus has to say. When Jesus talks about his death Peter is adamant that this should not happen. Jesus words are not easier for the disciples to understand or to accept.

The difference between Peter and the crowds that turn, and leave is that Peter even when he doesn't understand, even when he doesn't like what he hears, knows the words of Jesus to be the words of eternal life. He accepts from Jesus even those things that he does not like.

Why does Peter do this? How is he able to do this? Because the Holy Spirit has revealed to him that these words whether he likes them or not are the words which lead to eternal life. He does not understand everything Jesus says, and he does not like everything that Jesus says but one thing I do know says Peter:

**John 6:69** <sup>69</sup> "Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In this Peter emulates one of my personal heroes, the man who was born blind.

In John chapter nine Jesus heals a man who was born blind. The man gets into an argument with the pharisees about whether Jesus is a sinner or not, whether he is a prophet or not. The Pharisees are giving the man all these arguments about why Jesus should not be listened to. The man replies

**John 9:25** <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

Notice how once again the point is not our understanding but God grace. I don't know. I don't understand. I even sometimes don't like what Jesus say. The words of scripture are hard, like trying to sleep directly on a concrete floor. But they are the words that lead to eternal life. They are the words of the one who healed the blind man. They are the words of the one who died and rose again. They are the words of the one anointed by the Father and sent into the world. They are the words of the Christ.

Where else are we going to go? He alone has the words of eternal life.

So far we have been talking in a mostly abstract manner. We can see how some of Jesus sayings might be hard to accept, but right now we don't really have to deal with the reality of how hard they can be.

A picture of nails on a blackboard might make us cringe a little, but dealing with the actual sound is a lot harder.

These words weren't abstract for the Jews or the disciples. Jesus was calling on them to do a very hard thing right now, right here. To lay aside the Jewish theological traditions they had grown up with and partake of the heavenly bread that would give them life.

Again, Peter clings to that simple confession of faith. "Where shall we go?" This way might be hard but there is no other choice, "you alone have the words of eternal life."

It is easier to look at a picture of fingernails on a chalk board than to actually hear them. It is easy to talk about Jesus as the Savior now, but the day will come and maybe has and maybe will again when it is or will be a very a hard thing.

Maybe there is a very difficult point in your marriage. Jesus is asking you to forgive and to work on the marriage not to give up. It will be a hard thing to hear those words at that time. It will be hard like sleeping on a bed of stone. But the answer is the same:

"You are the Christ. You have the words of eternal life"

Maybe the time will come when doing the right thing will lead to some very bad consequences, when doing the right thing will cause suffering in your life. Again, at that time Jesus words will be a hard thing to hear. "Do what is right and forgive those who do evil." This is hard like sleeping on a bed of nails.

At that time also what can we answer except "you have the words of eternal life." The way ahead might be dark but what other path are we going to trod?

Maybe the time will come when you have sinned, and you know that you ought to confess to the pastor and or the person you sinned against. At this point listening to Jesus words is going to be a very very hard thing. Hard like sleeping on a bed of coals. "Where else are we going to go?"

There are all kinds of reasons why we might be in a situation where it would be easy to say with the Jews "who can listen to this." It might be easy to turn our backs and walk away. At such times we need to remember the words that the Holy Spirit speaks in our text. Because it is the Holy Spirit speaking not Peter alone. "You are the Christ. You have the words of eternal life."

He alone is the way. He alone is the truth. The way may be dark but it is the only way that leads through to the light.

God's word is often rough, like sand paper, scraping against our ears and hearts, but as Peter says. Where else are we going to go? Jesus has the words of eternal life."

In Revelation the Apostle John found out just how bitter the word of God can be.

**Revelation 10:9-10** <sup>9</sup> So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your

mouth." <sup>10</sup> Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

The word of God is often bitter, but it is also sweet. It is often hard to hear. It is also the most glorious news ever proclaimed. Sweeter than honey is the message that your sins are forgiven, that Christ has died and risen again, that heaven is ours.

Two weeks from today we will once again have the opportunity to receive Christ's true body and Christ's true blood. In coming to the Lord's Supper we confess as truth many of the things that we don't like to hear. We confess as truth that I am a sinner, that my thoughts and my heart are filled with anger and unforgiveness and lust and covetousness. We confess that Jesus is the only way of salvation, that he died for my sins.

We confess things that are bitter to our sinful nature, but we taste that which is sweet. We receive the very body and blood of Christ, and with it the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

**John 6:68 "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**