

John 6:60-69

What can you do for someone who vows: “As long as you’re preaching, I’m never going back to your church!” This happened to Jesus in our text. After preaching in Capernaum, most of the people who were there listening to His sermon said to themselves, “This is an impossible teaching! Who can even listen to Him!” And they didn’t...listen to Jesus that is. They stopped following Him. He kept preaching wherever He went, but they made sure they were not sitting in the pew.

It’s probably a good thing that this episode did not take place today, because Jesus would soon find Himself out of a job. What church is going to “keep” their preacher when the vast majority of the congregation leaves after hearing just one sermon? But this did not deter Jesus from doing what He came to do. He, the Word become Flesh, would preach sin and grace, Law and Gospel, even up to the day when they nailed Him to a cross.

It was not an “earthshaking” experience for Jesus to see how offended the people were at Him. He constantly dealt with this. The Bible is quite clear when it says that the Gospel is very offensive. It offends our sinful flesh. Jesus is the Gospel. He is the living, breathing Word of God, and it wasn’t just the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes who became offended at Him—the masses also did. When the people said, “Who can accept this Man’s teaching!” the answer is, “No one can.” Sinful man, by nature, cannot accept anything that God says. It is utter “foolishness” to us, says the Bible. This is why Jesus said that “no one can come to Me unless the Father draws him.”

Let me give you an example. The Gospel proclaims that in Jesus Christ we have salvation—that believing in Him heaven is ours. Believing this good news we therefore confess, as Christ declares, that because He is the Savior, no one and nothing else is. He alone is the way to heaven. Even though this is Gospel to our ears (and by faith we believe it—the faith God has worked in us), it grinds against our sinful flesh, because our flesh doesn’t want to believe it. Our flesh holds to the opinion that there is more than just one way to heaven.

Consider the fact that tomorrow is the 5-Year Anniversary of the “9/11 Attack.” And our flesh rebels against the truth that not every policeman and fireman who died while rescuing victims that day went to heaven. Even though God could be clearly seen in their heroic sacrifice, only those who died trusting in Jesus Christ went to heaven. But this truth, offensive as it may be to our sinful flesh, is the truth which rescues your flesh and blood from destruction.

In our text Jesus says, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.” You and I did not become Christians because of some heroic deed we performed, and you and I will not enter heaven because of some heroic deed that we will perform. “The flesh counts for nothing.” Our human flesh can be compared to Monopoly money. If you gathered together \$20,000 of this play money and went to a car dealership, would the salesman there allow you to buy a car with your Monopoly money? You would be laughed out the door, wouldn’t you? In the same way, the deeds of our human flesh count for nothing. No matter what I do with my human flesh and blood body, I cannot purchase eternal life for myself. I could rescue a city from

destruction. I could save an entire nation. As far as gaining life in heaven, it all counts for nothing.

But Jesus' words are the real thing. "My words are Spirit and they are life," He says. His words are not play money. They give to you exactly what they promise—forgiveness, life, and salvation...they give you faith. My flesh and blood count for nothing, but as the words of Jesus declare, He purchased heaven for you with His flesh and blood.

"The flesh counts for nothing, but Jesus' words are Spirit and they are life." You and I cannot by our own power save ourselves or even keep ourselves in the Christian Faith. Our flesh does not have such power. But the words of Jesus do. They are Spirit and they are life. That's why we have a Sunday School—to give Jesus' words to our children and grandchildren. That's why we come here Sunday mornings—because Jesus' words are Spirit and life. And isn't that why, Christian parents, you talk about Jesus in your home and have devotions with your family? Because, though our human flesh counts for nothing, Jesus' words are Spirit and they are life.

And yet, so many—in fact the vast majority of the people in our world, just like the people in Capernaum, want nothing to do with the words of Christ. When they were all leaving Him that day, Jesus turned to the Twelve and said, "Do you also want to go away?" Peter responded in faith, "To where, Lord?" "Where else can we go?" "You alone have the words of eternal life."

As powerful a statement as that was, it didn't take long before Peter and the others also left Jesus. They all fled from Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Where else can we go?" Peter had said. They found a place. They hid behind locked doors while Jesus was put to death.

Where else can we go? The truth is, as the Bible says, that you and I have all "gone our own sinful way." Every time we choose to give in to temptation we forsake Jesus. Every time we slander our neighbor we, like the people of Capernaum, walk away from Christ. Whenever you and I give in to our fleshly desires we, like them, close our ears to Jesus' words. There isn't one of us who will live each day, until the day of our death, without ever forsaking Jesus to follow our sinful flesh. Our flesh is weak. We give in so easily. That's why it is good news for us that the flesh counts for nothing. For if our eternal salvation depended on what we do with our flesh and blood, not one of us would be saved from perishing.

Friend, do not fear. Our flesh counts for nothing but Jesus' words are Spirit and they are life. And they are giving you life now by the power of the Holy Spirit. The comfort is that Jesus keeps calling us back to Himself by His word of life to give you life. We may become easily offended, even at Jesus, but He is never offended at you. Your Heavenly Father became offended at His Son, carrying your sin on the cross—you, He forgives. Jesus became the One who offended Him so that you are now the forgiven ones.

And even though our flesh is weak and so easily fails, Jesus gives His flesh for you. And in His flesh and blood there is nothing weak; there is nothing that can fail you. The good news for you is that you, right now, have eternal life in Jesus Christ because His words are Spirit and life, and His words are for you right here and now. No matter how weak your

flesh is; no matter how easily you fall into temptation, Jesus' words, right now, give you eternal life—they give you heaven. He forgives your sinful flesh because His flesh hung on a cross for you.

The question is not so much, “Lord, where shall we go?” but, “Where does your Lord go?” He goes to the cross for you. He goes there to die in your place. He goes to the font to baptize you into His death and resurrection. He goes to His Holy Supper to give you His flesh and blood for your salvation. This is where your Lord goes so that wherever you go in life, you can go in peace, because you go as a dear, forgiven child of God. Amen.