

John 6:59–71

⁵⁹ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”

⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you?”

⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ 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.”

⁶⁶ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”

⁷¹ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

“No Turning Back” John 6:60-71

INTRO:

You know the song that goes, *“I have decided to follow Jesus/ I have decided to follow Jesus/ I have decided to follow Jesus/ No turning back, no turning back.”* Each verse of this song concludes with the refrain, *“No turning back, no turning back.”* The point the song-writer made was, when we begin following Jesus, there are no “U-turns.” We can’t turn back from following Him. Jesus said it this way, ***“No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”*** Luke 9:62. While for those who truly know the Lord there is no turning back, some who professed to know Him and who began following did turn back and followed Him no more.

We find a group like this at the end of **John 6**. To understand this text, we need to understand who *“the disciples”* are in this text. There may have been as many as four groups of people involved in this discussion with Jesus. **(1)** First, there was the hungry group who were looking for a free lunch. **(2)** Another group, called *“the Jews”* appear in **verse 41**. **(3)** Third, we find a group called *“disciples.”* **(4)** Finally, we discover *“the Twelve”* in **verses 67-71**. Our Lord here outlined the difference between professing disciples and real disciples. He does this by showing us those who turn away and those who stay.

I. The False Disciples Who Turned Away (v. 60-66)

II. The True Disciples Who Stayed (v. 67-71)

I. The False Disciples Who Turned Away (v. 60-66)

“Therefore, many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’

When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

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. 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. From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.’”

A. There is a passage that we will come to later in our study of the Gospel of John which needs to be kept in mind here. It is **John 8:30-32**.

“As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

1. In our text we meet two groups of men and women who both claimed to be the Lord’s disciples. One group were real disciples and the second only professed they were.

2. Before we go any further, perhaps, we should define what a disciple is. The Greek word for *“disciple”* means *“a student, pupil, or apprentice.”* The common practice in the time our Lord lived was for disciples to attach themselves to a Rabbi and to live with him, serve him, and learn from him. The first disciples we meet in this text are not *“the Twelve,”* whom Jesus chose. Rather, they were people who thought themselves students of the Lord and who appeared interested in His doctrine. Yet, it becomes very clear they were not as committed as they thought they were.

3. In **John 8**, Jesus told us *“real”* disciples were marked by their continuation in the Word of God. Jesus did not say in **John 8** that disciples were some kind of super Christians who made a deeper commitment to the Lord. Rather, He said to those who made an initial profession of faith what was expected of them who were truly His followers. A true believer is one who continues in the word of God.

B. These disciples, who thought they were followers of Jesus, had listened quietly to this exchange between the Lord Jesus and the opportunistic group who came for the free lunch. As this discussion went on, they found themselves having difficulty with the things Jesus

said. Therefore, in v. 60 they revealed the first sign that they were not **“true”** disciples of Jesus Christ. They could not bear the truth.

1. **“Many of His disciples said, ‘This word is harsh, who can hear it?’”** The word translated **“hard”** doesn’t mean they didn’t understand, it meant they didn’t like what He said. Calvin commented, **“The hardness was in their hearts and not in the saying.”**

2. What exactly did they find hard to take? What were they unable to embrace about what Jesus said? Some suggest it was the metaphor of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. But I think it was the awareness that Jesus said He had to become a part of their lives for them to really have any part in Him! They could not handle the truth. Carson suggests that **“they were unprepared to relinquish their own sovereign authority and therefore were incapable of taking the first steps of faith.”**

3. We live in a world which cannot bear the truth. Most people today live in a state of self-deception. They avoid the truth by denying its existence. They say things like, “What is truth for you is not truth for me!” But that doesn’t work when it comes to God. A true disciple of Jesus Christ is one who is willing to embrace the truth, not because we like it, but because it is the truth!

4. In **verses 61-62**, Jesus, knowing they murmured about all of this, challenged them even further.

“When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, ‘Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? If you are going to stumble at this, what are you going to do when you see the Son of man ascending to where He was at first?’”

If they could not surrender to this first revelation of truth, what were they going to do when they saw the rest of the story?

C. In **verse 63** we see the second mark of a false disciple. They were focused more on this present world, than upon the world to come.

1. Jesus introduced a second problem for these so-called disciples. He drew a contrast between **“the flesh”** and **“the Spirit.”**

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

The **“flesh”** here referred to the things of this world. These false disciples had been interested in the things that cater to the quality of life in this world. They followed Jesus because they were convinced that He was a wise man. They also followed because of the miracles that He did. It had to be thrilling to see a lame man walk and a person who had been blind now seeing. These were the things that they were interested in.

2. The other side of the coin was the things of the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the one who gives life. The work of the Spirit of God is what Jesus did on planet earth. We see this principle repeatedly in the Bible. Perhaps the most vivid text is found in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones in **chapter 37**. In **Ezekiel 37:13-14** the LORD interprets the vision for Israel.

“Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and

you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it, declares the LORD.”

II. The True Disciples Who Stayed (v. 67-71)

A. The real disciples were they who, first, openly embraced the truth. **(v.67-68)** Did they fully understand or even like what Jesus said? I don't think they necessarily did. Yet, they knew who Jesus was and that was all that mattered. Because, if Jesus was God the Son, then all He said was truth and must be accepted and practiced.

B. Second, they remained with Him until the end.

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

The true believers persevere unto the end because God preserves them unto the end!

C. Third, the Lord Jesus chose them **(verse 70)**. Jesus Himself chose them. Even then, there was one who did not belong **(verse 71)**.

What do we learn from this?

First, if you have not come unto Him you need to do that. **Verse 37** is still true.

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

Second, it should make us all the more diligent to apply **2 Peter 1:10**.

“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.”

What kind of disciple are we?

Hymn #376 *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*