

A Vital Question.

Text: John 6:57-69

Suggested Hymns:

149, 332, 300, 71, 146

1) What Prompted The Question?

2) How This Question Is Answered

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 6:57-69, ⁵⁷ *“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.* ⁵⁸ *“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.”* 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.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“To whom shall we go?” is a question frequently asked. When a person finds himself in a difficult situation, in great need, trouble, or

distress, unable to help himself, he looks around for some one who might be able and willing to come to his aid.

If it is a case of serious illness, where a human life is at stake, a matter of life and death, one well-meaning friend will suggest this remedy, another this or that doctor. But when the case is a desperate one, you want only the best, the most skilful, and most experienced doctor or surgeon that can be procured.

But which of the many doctors you know or that are recommended to you shall you choose? To whom shall you go? Much depends on the right choice. The wrong choice may be fatal; it may mean the death of the patient.

Spiritually we all are by nature in a bad way. We are sick unto death. Sin like a malignant cancer has penetrated every fibre of our being. And we are utterly unable to help or heal ourselves. Unless we can find a physician who can successfully remove from our soul the cancer of sin, we are doomed, not only to temporal but eternal death.

Besides this, we are continually surrounded by perils which threaten to destroy us, against which all human precautions are unavailing. We meet with bitter experiences inflicting wounds on our hearts, for which no healing balm is found on this earth.

And finally, at the end of the trail, the grim prospect of death is lying in wait for us. To whom shall we go in all our difficulties, misery, distress, and fear, for comfort, help, and deliverance?

The wrong decision is even more disastrous here than in the case of physical illness. Go to an impostor and all is lost forever. Today we shall ponder the important question found in our text, "*To Whom Shall We Go?*" May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. What Prompted The Question?

The question was addressed by Peter to Jesus at a time of mass desertion. Our text says, "*From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*"

For a time Jesus had been very popular. A mighty wave of enthusiasm had swept the masses when Jesus fed them in the wilderness. They wanted to make Him their king by proclaiming His Messiahship then and there.¹

But when Jesus explained to them on the following day that He was the Bread of Life, spiritual food for their souls; that only those who ate His flesh and drank His blood, that is, believed in Him as their Saviour, would have eternal life,² they murmured,³ and many turned their backs on Jesus and no longer followed Him.

Thus Jesus was left with only a little handful of disciples. Peter was one of them. It was Peter who on this occasion asked, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go?”***

The same sad spectacle which prompted Peter’s question confronts us today. Think of the appalling number of deserters, people who once walked with Jesus, but have turned their backs on Him. You yourself may know some of them.

Baptised in His name, instructed in His Word, they confessed their faith in Him and solemnly vowed life-long loyalty to Him at their confirmation. They had every opportunity to know Him in all His divine grace and truth. Everything was done to keep them in His fold. And still they chose to leave Jesus and walk with Him no more.

Why? Some took offence at His Word, as in our text, ⁶⁰ ***“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*** Christ’s Word and their own reason clashed; others, ridiculed by unbelieving teachers, instructors or schoolmates, because of their religion, became ashamed of Jesus.

Still others, growing negligent in the use of God’s Word and prayer, chose ungodly companions, learned to love the pleasures of sin, and resented the warnings of the pastor and Christian parents and were seen in church no longer.

The twelve disciples remained steadfast when many others forsook Him. To these Jesus now turns and asks the question, ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** Words are totally inadequate to express the utter sadness that filled the Saviour’s heart when all these people turned away from Him, people whom He loved, whom He had come to save, to whom He had offered life and salvation, for whose redemption He one day would lay down His life.

There is a distressing note in the question ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** There was indeed some satisfaction in the fact that not all had left Jesus. But

would those who remained be faithful to the end? Or would they also later on be offended because of Jesus and become backsliders and desert Him also?

Yes, Jesus knew better than the disciples how very weak they were, that the time would come when they all would forsake Him for a time; that one would deny and another betray Him.⁴ Therefore He asks so wistfully, ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** And this question prompted Peter to ask, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***

Are you still a Christian? Thank God for that. But will you always remain faithful to your Saviour? Every time you meet, or think of, some one who has fallen away from the faith Jesus, addresses to you the question, ***“Do you also want to go away?”***

His loving heart aches for those sheep who have gone astray, and He is anxiously concerned that you remain true to Him, that you do not follow the big crowd of deserters. But Jesus also knows how great the danger is of your falling away, because of the very fact that so many people you know, are no longer walking with Him. These people may become a temptation and a snare to you.

Do you realise your danger, your weakness? Two apostles fell. Do you feel secure in your own strength? When you see so many of your friends and classmates running with the ungodly world, do you not feel a powerful tug at your heart in the same direction?

Do you not find your heart at times murmuring and rebelling when you hear in a sermon or read in your Bible one of His ***“hard sayings,”*** truths difficult to reconcile with human logic, or when certain pet sins of yours are rebuked?

Do not God’s Ten Commandments sometimes appear to you as a galling yoke, restricting your freedom of action? Are you not often dissatisfied with the cross He expects you to bear for His sake?

Such thoughts and feelings are the seeds of desertion. Therefore your Saviour, who knows your heart better than you, asks you, ***“Do you also want to go away?”*** And what is your answer? God grant that it may be the same as Peter’s, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.***

2. How This Question Is Answered.

When Peter replied to Christ's question, "*Do you also want to go away?*" by answering, "*Lord, to whom shall we go?*" he was not really asking for information. Rather, it was a most emphatic negative: *No, Lord, we shall not go away. We shall never leave nor forsake You. There is no one else to whom we want to go.*

Shall we go to the scribes and Pharisees? They tell us that we must win God's favour and eternal life by keeping the Law, yes, by observing the doctrines and commandments of men. But we know that we are poor, lost sinners, whom the Law of God condemns, and to follow human traditions is a vain thing.

Or shall we go to the Sadducees? They tell us that there is no resurrection, no life beyond the grave. They leave us altogether without hope.

We may also ask the question, "*Lord, to whom shall we go?*" But even today there is nobody else go to with our sin-burdened conscience, with our troubled, sorrow-laden hearts, no one else can give us genuine comfort, help, and life eternal.

To whom shall we go if we forsake Jesus? To Rome with its doctrine of salvation by-works, to that Church which, where our own merits do not suffice, directs us to the blessed saints in heaven, who, according to their own testimony, are but sinners saved by grace, who are not aware of our trials here below, and who could not help us if they were?

Or shall we go to the Modern liberal churches, who would destroy our faith in the Bible as God's inspired Word, who deny the deity, the miracles, the resurrection, and the Redeemership of Christ and tell us that the way to God's heart and to heaven is by following the example of the holy life of Jesus, which no common mortal has ever been able to do perfectly?

Or shall we go to the lodge with its religion of salvation by character? Or shall we go to one of the many modern cults, such as Christian Science churches, which would deliver us from sin, sickness, and death by simply denying that these evils really exist, in spite of the fact that its adherents sin, get sick, and die like all other mortals?

Or shall we go to the Spiritualists, whose claim to be able to commune with the souls of the departed has been exposed as fraudulent innumerable times? Or shall we go to the atheists, who say there is no God, no hereafter, that death ends all?

What folly, therefore, to forsake Christ and go to any other, when all others want to lure us away from Jesus and only have false hopes or no hope at all to offer!

The true Answer is expressed in our text, ***“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.”***

Peter will not forsake Jesus for any one else, for he knows, and is absolutely sure, that Jesus is ***“the Christ,”*** the promised Messiah, the Lord’s Anointed, of whom all the prophets of the Old Testament had spoken.

He is convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus is not a common mortal, an ordinary man, but the Son of the living God. Therefore he calls Him Lord in the sense of Jehovah. To have Jesus for a friend is to have the almighty God for a friend, who is able to help him in every need.

And Peter is speaking not only for himself, but in the name of his companions. He expresses the conviction of all the other apostles as well as his own. Why were these men so sure of this? Their faith was not mere fancy, not an illusion; it was based on facts.

They had seen Jesus do things which required divine power.⁵ Later they witnessed even greater miracles, saw Jesus restore the dead to life, and saw Him after He had risen from the dead.

True, we have not seen Jesus do these things, but we have the inspired testimony of these eye-witnesses in the New Testament, a testimony which they sealed with their life-blood.

On the basis of their testimony we, too, believe and are sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, on whose every promise we can depend, who is always near us, can hear our prayers, and help us in all our needs and perplexities. There is none other like Him. Why should we leave Him and follow another?

Peter also gives another reason why he and his fellow-apostles will not go to another, *You have the words of eternal life*. They had been with Jesus and had heard Him speak as no other man had ever spoken, words of eternal life.⁶ In these words Christ not merely tells of, and describes, eternal life, but actually offers and imparts it.

The person who by faith believes these words of Christ, possesses the beginning of a glorious, blessed life, a life that will never end. He will never taste the bitterness of eternal death. How can this be? By giving His own life for the life of the world,⁷ Christ atoned for, and took away, the sins of the world,⁸ thus removing the cause of universal mortality and procuring for all mankind the priceless boon of unending, deathless life with God in heaven.⁹

And to prove His complete conquest of death, He rose from the dead three days after His crucifixion. In His Word, the Gospel, He offers His victory over death, not as the reward to the obedient, to men of blameless character, but as an absolutely free gift to every sinner who accepts His Gospel and trusts in Him as his Saviour.

As the Son of the living God, Christ is both the Author and Dispenser of life.¹⁰ Those who trust in His words need fear nothing, not even death. Through temporal death they pass into the full enjoyment of perfect life.¹¹

“To whom shall we go” but to Christ, the Son of the living God, who alone has words of eternal life? To leave Him would mean turning our backs on the only sure hope of life ever given to a dying world and surrendering ourselves to the false, elusive hopes held out by impostors or to the utter despair of paganism and atheism.

God forbid that any of us should commit such disastrous folly! May every one of us by God’s grace confess with Peter, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*⁶ *“Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 6:15

² John 6:26-58

³ John 6:60

⁴ John 6:70-71

⁵ John 2:1-11; John 5:5-9; John 6:1-13

⁶ John 5:24; 6:47; 8:51; 10:27-28; 11:25-26

⁷ John 6:51

⁸ John 1:29

⁹ Rom. 6:23

¹⁰ John 5:21-26

¹¹ John 5:24