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*Clabon Bogan Jr. – Interim Pastor*



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# *Sunday Church School*

*January 24, 2021*

“Jesus’ Hard Sayings” – John 6:53-54, 60-71

Golden Text: John 6:65

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“John 6:53-54; 60-71”

<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>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.

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<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."

<sup>70</sup> Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

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

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In the gospel of **Luke 6:40**, we find this utterance of Jesus: A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

This expression followed a query made in v 39 rendered by way of a parable: “And He spoke a parable to them: **“Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?”**

The point here is that one must learn the right way (Luke 6:40) and receive correction before seeking to teach others (Luke 6:41).

- In ancient Judaism, the purpose of a disciple’s training was to make him a competent teacher, in his own right.
- A disciple did not have more knowledge about the law than his teacher.

**Then He says in Luke 6:41-42** And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?

<sup>42</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that *is* in your own eye?

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Here Jesus uses hyperbole, and the exaggeration would probably draw laughter—and thus attention—by Jesus’ hearers.

Jesus, as a Master Teacher, used a wide variety of teaching methods, which each had their own advantage when teaching to different audiences.

A few of the techniques He would employ are:

- 1. Parables.** Jesus spoke often using parables, which are stories that illustrate an important truth.
  - Many would be from life situations of the people to impact them
- 2. Object Lessons.** Sometimes he would use actual objects, and sometimes he would act out the object lesson.
  - Like those found in Matt 19 (little children), Mark 12 (fish) and John 4
- 3. Dialogue.** This engagement would involve the asking and answering of questions
  - Querying allows one to look beyond the surface to determine the real question that someone was trying to ask Him (John 2 & 3)

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- 4. Comparisons.** These comparisons often took the form of parables, object lessons, similes, and metaphors.
  - Thereby Jesus would make a strong point to His audiences (Matt 5 and 13)
- 5. Poetry.** Within Jewish poetry during this era, the focus and structure of the poetry was focused on the relationship between successive lines.
  - Restating poetry lines would bring out the emphasis of the point (Matt 7; Luke 6)
- 6. Hyperbole.** Overstatement or exaggeration of a point is very effective
  - Sometimes these are difficult to identify, but the one in Matt. 7 concerning the speck and plank in the eye is obvious
- 7. Puns.** Many of the puns spoken by Jesus are idiomatic, meaning they are not easily translatable
  - These expressions become “play on words” to depict His truth in a sort of humorous way
  - **Matthew 23:24** Blind guides, who strain out a gnat (galma) and swallow a camel (gamla) – a humorous warning to avoid the impurity of dead insects in your drink

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One of the principles of successful teaching and effective learning is repetition

- There is an interesting exchange in Isaiah 28:9-13 (NLT)
- Isa 28:9-10 "Who does the Lord think we are?" they ask. "Why does he speak to us like this? Are we little children, just recently weaned?"<sup>10</sup> He tells us everything over and over—one line at a time, one line at a time, a little here, and a little there!"
- ❖ Isa 28:13 So the Lord will spell out his message for them again, one line at a time,

## **LESSON OUTLINE:**

- I. TEACHING AND RESPONSE** —John 6:53-54, 60-61
- II. EXPLANATION AND ALIENATION** —John 6:62-66
- III. QUESTIONS & UNDERSTANDING** —John 6:67-71

- I. TEACHING AND RESPONSE** —John 6:53-54, 60-61

- Jesus spoke metaphorically when He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (V 51)

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Jesus was contrasting the new and old manna in good **midrashic style**, like a good Jewish expositor.

- This style of learning engages the words of the text, behind and beyond the text, while also focusing on each letter, and the words left unsaid by each line,”

Unfortunately, there were people who interpreted Him literally, for they did not know the heart of the teacher.

- The Jewish as well as the Greco-Roman world abhorred cannibalism
- Eating the flesh of the Passover lamb was required (Exd. 12:8); but drinking the blood of the lamb (or of any creature) was always forbidden (Lev. 17:10-11).

A thoughtful interpreter, however, might have also recalled the expression “the blood of grapes,” meaning wine (Gen. 49:11), which was essential to the Passover meal.

Thus, on a literal level (cannibalism and drinking blood) obeying Jesus’ statement should have merited judgment, not salvation; thus they are confused.

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At any rate, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper never constituted a means to obtain eternal life; it was primarily a **memorial** of His death.

When Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” He was emphasizing His own significance for eternal life.

By referring to His flesh and blood He was figuratively referring to His whole person – utilizing **synecdoche** in which one part stands for the whole.

- Jesus was illustrating belief, what it means to appropriate Him by faith (v. 40).
- He expressed the truth negatively (v. 53) and then positively (v. 54a)”

The only way for us to gain eternal life is to appropriate Christ Himself as our Lord and Savior.

- He is our only hope, and without Him we remain spiritually dead and devoid of eternal life.
- Jesus later said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

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There was a mixed response (John 6:60-61) to what Jesus had stated and this discrepancy resides in the manner men interpret what He said; and Scripture

**a) Literal interpretation b) Grammatical interpretation c) Historical Interpretation**

This means we attempt to look first at a literal interpretation, however some passages cannot be taken entirely literally—some type of figurative language is being purposely employed

- V 60 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?"

When Jesus spoke of his disciples eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He obviously did not mean that literally!

When we read that many of these disciples stopped following Him, it was because they lacked spiritual ears to hear and eyes to see (Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27; Rom. 11:8).

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Jesus, knowing all things, was aware that such grumbling was taking place among His listeners, so He asked the question, “Doth this offend you?” (vs. 61).

- Many listening were not sincere in seeking the truth from Jesus.
- They were more interested in being entertained by seeing a miracle.

Note that Jesus made no attempt to clarify or simplify His meaning to those who were offended, not even to his loyal disciples.

## **II. EXPLANATION AND ALIENATION** —John 6:62-66

- The Jews had already been offended that Jesus said He had come down from heaven (V 41-42) and they had to eat His flesh (V 52).
- What would happen, then, if they should see Him ascend back to heaven?
- It would have forced them to realize that all His seemingly crazy claims were actually true!
- But Jesus did not ascend back heaven then; His mission was not yet accomplished.
- So those who were offended felt confirmed in their indignation.

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True life is not limited to the physical and material realm as we learn from Jesus’ entire spiritual message.

- This is what the confused were missing completely.

Limiting our understanding to what is fleshly and earthly will never lead to eternal life; and Jesus was trying to tell them true, spiritual life is much more

And not only was He telling them about the value of true spiritual life, He was saying that they could only find it in Him alone.

- And they were failing to understand Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit as the giver of true life.
- Apart from Him, life lived in the flesh is worthless and hopeless.
- What the crowd considered to be a “hard saying” (vs. 60) was in actuality the presentation of the profound truth about gaining eternal life.

Jesus is the Bread from heaven who, when received by faith as Lord and Savior, gives eternal life through His Spirit.

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Although even the followers who were sincerely seeking Him had difficulty understanding His metaphor, they remained faithful.

- That is the nature of true faith; it trusts in the Lord even when understanding fails, always believing difficult teachings will be made clear in God’s perfect timing.

The motive behind Jesus’ harsh words is not difficult to see—He wanted people to count the cost of following him (Luke 14:25-33).

- His words shocked and challenged.
- They were not comfortable half-truths, but hard-edged truth.
- Those who follow Jesus in hopes of feeling good always will be disappointed sooner or later.
- Unbelief never surprises Jesus -- It grieves Him. But it is nevertheless included within God’s perfect plan.

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## **III. QUESTIONS & UNDERSTANDING** —John 6:67-71

- Jesus challenged the Twelve, pointedly asking, “Will ye also go away?”
- How confident were they now about who He was and what He had come to do?
- The Greek construction of this question assumes a negative response. Did Jesus doubt their commitment?
- It is more likely that He was issuing them a challenge to reaffirm their commitment to Him at this crucial point.
- At this point in their training, the disciples were still immature; and one of them we know will eventually betray Him.
- Jesus was affirming to them that there can be no middle ground when it comes to believing in Him.
- Peter had the right answer: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (V 68).
- The philosophies of the world offer no guarantee of heaven; Jesus is our only hope and Savior.

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- Peter then affirmed without hesitation: “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (V. 69).
- Mere intellectual assent to these truths about Jesus inadequate for salvation; there must be a genuine, personal trust in and commitment to Him.
- There are those who readily affirm all these truths about Jesus, but they still have not received Him and yielded their lives to Him.

Many people today turn away from Christ, while others pretend to follow, going to church for status, approval of family and friends, or business contacts.

But there are only two real responses to Jesus—you either accept Him or reject Him. How have you responded to Christ?”

Judas is a perfect example of one who knew all about Jesus and was among His closest associates and yet never really became a believer.

- For Jesus to indicate that one whom He had chosen among the Twelve was a “devil” (vs. 70) means He knew one of His own disciples would betray Him.



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## **“ADVANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE”**



1. What did Jesus say that caused consternation for His hearers (John 6:51-53)? How should we understand Jesus' statement?
2. How did some of Jesus' followers react to His statement? Why did they reject this teaching?
3. Why did Jesus refer to His ascension (vs. 62)? What was Jesus saying about the true nature of life?
4. What did Jesus already know about His followers? What did He ask His twelve disciples after many followers left Him?
5. What was Peter's insightful response to Jesus' challenge? How is Judas a prime example of what Jesus teaches in this lesson?

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## **TODAY’S AIM**

**Facts:** we must learn to abide in Jesus, even when we do not understand His ways.

**Principle:** to develop an unflinching loyalty to Christ, even when following Him includes dealing with realities that offend our sensibilities.

**Application:** to practice unconditional loyalty to the Lord in our everyday lives.

## **PRACTICAL LESSON POINTS:**

1. How do we handle Jesus’ teachings which seem offensive (John 6:53-54).
2. We must put aside personal feelings over the hard truths of Christ’s teachings (John 6:60-65).
3. We should never forsake Jesus because you lack understanding (John 6:66-71).
4. A key principle of discipleship is that each disciple must choose Jesus over his or her own feelings.

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