

Sermon Series: The Hard Sayings of Jesus
Sermon 1 “All or Nothing”
John 6:51-61

The scripture we are about to read describes the activity of Jesus in the early stage of his ministry, but definitely his ministry was in full speed.

- At this point in his ministry Jesus had turned the water into wine (John 2).
- By this time he had gone into the temple and confronted the leaders because they corrupted the use of the temple (John 2).
- By now a well respected rabbi by the name of Nicodemus had come to him by night asking deep spiritual questions (John 3).
- By now Jesus has had a conversation with the woman at the well who had about as many husbands as Elizabeth Taylor had and at that time currently lived with a man who wasn't her husband. (John 4)
- And Jesus had miraculously feed multitudes with bread and done other miracles (John 6). Matter of fact people are so impressed, they follow him but not for any deep spiritual reasons, just for more bread.

So Jesus had a crowd on his hands and that can be a dangerous thing because you never know how crowds will react. Crowds are so risky because you just don't know specifically and intimately what each person in the crowd is thinking, feeling and expecting. **We are going to look at what Jesus said to the crowd and consider the reaction of the crowd to Jesus.** Because in a sense, we are the crowd and God is watching to gauge our reactions to these words of Jesus. That is the reason why instead of my sermon points appearing in the center of the bulletin today, there is space which invites you to write your response to the words of Jesus and whatever message God's spirit gives you today.

Reading of John 6:51-61 (NRSV)

The Life : I Am the Living Bread v.51

Bread was the key food for daily living among the common person during the days of Jesus. God through Moses miraculously provided the Jews with bread when they were traveling toward the Promise Land. So when Jesus said, **“I am living bread”** he meant he is what we really need the most today; not just when we die. Some might be thinking, Say what Jesus? Going to the football games, the golf course, the lake, the mall, the good paying career that is the good stuff of life. Matter of fact its so good I can miss worship, not read scripture, pray serve with others, and never really feel like I am missing out.

Jesus said **“I am the living bread.”** I am what really makes life meaningful. There could be some thinking, are you sure Jesus because every time I read about you, when ever I actually do read about you, I don't get your point, I don't understand. Jesus all you seem to do is worry about others, never have any fun, and then on top of that you take the heat for trying to do good and get crucified. If that's rewarding, I would hate to see the alternative?

But see this is one of the hard saying of Jesus. He claims he is ultimately the source of what this life is really about just like bread is the most basic food that can sustain us. But there were people in the crowds who were impressed that Jesus took a little bit of bread and multiplied it and got them through a episode of hunger; **but to see Jesus as the, the, thing our lives need the most that was another question?**

It would be similar if when a loved one was sick and God's presence got us through those long days or nights at the hospital. We encountered a crisis in a relationship that we didn't think we could bear and we credit God for giving us strength to make a stand.

We found hope and patience through a financial challenge.

But when the crisis past, there's gratitude for the help, but nothing else deeper really changes in us towards God. This story challenges us to see if we are like those who came to Jesus when their stomach growled for food. Do we only come to Jesus to turn a crisis over to him but **we're not turning our entire lives over to him?**

All or Nothing: "Unless you eat the flesh and of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you." vs. 53-54

Not only does Jesus say he is the real life source and there are no alternatives, not one of many paths of God, not substitutes like careers, hobbies, or anything else. **Jesus said we have to eat his flesh and drink his blood.** Scripture like this was eventually used by enemies of Christian to accuse the early church of cannibalism. You have to admit that if you interpret this literally to some it might sound a bit Jeffery Dahammer like. But the reference of flesh and blood means Jesus gives us a proposition. **Body and blood means his offer is an all or nothing proposition.** He is defining the terms of those who can really have a part of him. There is not just a part of Jesus we can take and we say I like that part of Jesus; but not this and not that. Sometimes we tend to want the Jesus who says "come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." But we are like the crowds if a look of shock and awe is on our face, when Jesus said things that teach us he wants his character and will done in every aspect of our lives and heart. He wants to lead us so our money and material things don't get in the way of being faithful to him. He wants his word living in us to keep our lives pure so lust, or hatred doesn't rule in our hearts.

So when Jesus said to this crowd of people eat my flesh and drink my blood he was saying you have to take all of me, all of what I teach, all of what I command or none of me. It's another way of

Jesus saying he doesn't want just a little of us; he wants all of us.

Illustration Knights Templar: I read a story about the Knights Templar and how they were a special group of soldiers used to protect leaders of the church. It is said that when these knights were baptized they held their sword in their hand and every bit of them was submerged below the water, but they held their sword above the water and refused to allow their sword to be baptized. By holding their sword above the water, they refused to surrender their identity as a soldier to the full control of God.

What's your sword? What is it that we won't let go and refuse to surrender to God's leading including God's leading by the council we find in scripture.

Is it loyalty to your work that always comes before anything else and the need to make a little more money?

Is it loyalty your sport and recreation.

Is it the remote control to your television that stays in your hand more than your bible or keeps you from being with others.

Maybe it is rejecting the same advice that keeps coming to us from different directions and people but our pride and fear refuses to let go and listen.

You know what I keep reading about that is the sword many churches and pastors hang onto? It's the desire to have a crowd. It's a desire to do anything to increase attendance and not lose the people they have. It's the willingness to lay off the biblical teachings and topics that might make people in the pew feel guilt, uncomfortable or embarrassed.

If you think you are totally sold out to Jesus great! But temptation, success, distress are always around the corner. They will compete with character of Jesus Christ that is to live and breathe through you and me. "Eat my flesh and drink my blood" means the

conditions for following Jesus is a all or nothing proposition and we have to live a life of continual surrender.

Disciples; not crowds v. 59

The all or nothing proposition teaches us this, **Jesus wasn't looking for maintaining a crowd he was calling disciples.** In the religious tradition of Jesus day a disciple would follow their spiritual leader/teacher anywhere they went. Crowds go their own way when the excitement is over, they get what they want or they don't like what they see and hear. Jesus was looking for disciples. Verse 59 tells us Jesus said all this in the synagogue. Just think the way they were following him I bet that synagogue was packed. Who knows the leaders of the synagogue might never seen that synagogue that full except for weddings and funerals. The description of a crowds could very well mean he was packing them in when he starts saying "eat my flesh, drink my blood" its "all of me or nothing." You wonder if the synagogue leaders took up the offering before Jesus spoke, because that type of talk could be a real collection killer.

Scripture teaches us Jesus gave his disciples a mission to go make disciples like he was trying to make; not to go build a crowd. Disciples learn the ways of Jesus. Disciples will have passion to worship God like Jesus. Disciples will want to serve others like Jesus. Crowds can watch and watch and never be changed. Crowds can sit in churches year after year after year and not grow in the ways of Christ, never apply the principles of scripture into their daily lives.

Crowds can live like this young man in the video lives - take a look. Play bluefish

He is not alone. It's not a young person's problem. It is sad when people claiming to be Christian can attend worship consistently and they cannot tell what is the mission of very church they attend. They can attend years and not practice repentance when they sin or

forgiveness when they have been wronged. They come Sunday after Sunday but not apply biblical teaching of Jesus to daily aspects of their lives.

Part of the reason that happens is pastors and church leaders are not faithful to make disciples. We water down the standards so we don't offend any one and we settle and prefer crowds. We lower the bar of challenge not just because we don't want to offend any body but; we also get more comfortable with staying the way we are.

I never intentionally want my pastoral leadership or the leadership of this church to settle for just having a crowd. I never want to play the role of a prostitute to make people feel good about who they are instead of calling them to fulfill scripture like **Romans 8:29** that says **“we are to be conformed to the image of the Son.”**

In verse 60 the Bible tells us that some of the people said, **“this is too difficult”** - translation, “I am not swallowing this stuff. I'll come to Jesus when my health is bad. I pray and go to church when I am unemployed, or some other prayer needs answering, but sell out completely, turn every aspect of my life over to Jesus, all to Jesus I surrender, I don't think so.

Then Jesus asked the question to his inner circle of disciples which is our question. “Does this offend you” He was asking his inner circle of disciples if this all or nothing proposition offended them. The word offend means the same as a block that causes someone to stumble not move forward.

- Does it offend you that Jesus says he needs to be the bread, the ultimate source for where we draw meaning and purpose?
- Does it offend you that Jesus said its all or nothing?
- Does this stop you from going deeper in seeking Christ and what he wants to do with your life and our church?

One pastor stated the following about what it means to him to go deeper if Jesus really is the bread of life. He writes:

1. Going deeper into my commitment to God’s Church.

I can’t be committed to Jesus (the head) without being committed to the church (His body). Thus, I must love God’s people with the same fervor and passion that I have for Him. I can’t say I love and serve Jesus if I don’t also love and serve his Bride (the church).

2. Going deeper into my commitment to the world.

The world is dying and lost without Jesus. If I am to “go deeper” I must dive deeper into the muck and mire of a broken world in order to reach people. Pontificating about theological mysteries doesn’t save people from Hell. Only the Holy Spirit, through passionate, loving evangelism, can do that.

3. Going deeper into my commitment to being mastered by Christ.

I’m a work-in-progress, and the more God works on me, the more progress I realize I need. Continually working to allow Jesus to be Lord of my money, my attitudes, my eyes, my mind, and my words feels like a never-ending process. Thus, I must go deeper into submission to Jesus every single day.

Does Bible study play a part in these three commitments? Yes. Is Bible study enough by itself? No. Deepening knowledge is not enough; it must accompany deepening commitments!

Crowds never make deep commitments. Disciples, growing followers of Jesus make and keep deep commitments and on the terms that Jesus sets even though his words are sometimes hard.

Pray