

SERMON FOR SUN. AUG. 15 2021

Pent 12B John 6:51-69 “No apologies.”

Dear fellow redeemed of, by and for Christ, in today’s Holy Gospel lesson Jesus, speaking in the synagogue at Capernaum makes two statements that are extremely offensive to them.

He says, **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread they will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”**

And then he added, **“I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.”**

Upon hearing those words, John says **many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.**

Many who were following Him walked away. Why? The people said: **This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?**

But it wasn’t the words of Jesus that were too hard to understand; the people understood full well what He was saying.

This wasn’t a learning issue - it was a faith issue.

Jesus claimed that He came down from heaven, that He gives life, that He gives His flesh and blood as food and drink. So many who’d followed Him walked away.

But notice what *doesn’t* happen here: Jesus doesn’t apologize for what he said.

In our day and age, when someone says something that creates an uproar or offends someone, they try to explain away what they said in more acceptable terms; they try to soften it, try to settle things down. These attempts to mitigate one’s offensive remarks are referred to as “Walking it back.”

But Jesus doesn’t walk back what He said. You might think He’d want to, given that so many are leaving. But no.

He doesn’t say: Oh, you misunderstood. He doesn’t tone it down or make His teaching more acceptable, more palatable.

Because He meant what He said. He really does give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink in His Supper.

He really is the Bread of Life. And we really have no hope of life apart from Him. It’s all true.

Jesus was there in the beginning and created life, and He continues to give life, He sustains life, and only He can give eternal life. So, no, He doesn’t walk it back.

You see, speaking the truth isn't a popularity contest. Jesus isn't trying to get elected as Savior or leader of Israel.

He isn't trolling for votes. He IS the Savior. Whether you believe him or not. As the wall behind me states: **He IS the way, the truth, and the life.**

Jesus will lay down His life for the life of the world and feed us with Himself. And unless we feed on Him, receive His forgiveness, and so live in Him and He in us, we do not and will not have life. ***This is the Word of the Lord.***

This claim to be Jesus speaks the absolute truth is among the reasons so many grumble about and reject Him today.

Claims of exclusive, absolute truth aren't popular in a society that believes all truth is relative.

Folks today rely on themselves and think they are wiser than they really are, and they will reject words and teaching that seem to disagree with that.

But from God's perspective, it's quite a different thing. When God looks at the world, He doesn't see potential, He doesn't see wisdom, He doesn't see ingenuity, He doesn't see a bunch of people that ***just need a little help*** to get over the hump.

God sees a world in rebellion, a world deceived by Satan; a world of death, not life; a world of people who think they know better than God; in short, *a world in need of saving.*

**So here's the good news: God doesn't walk it back, not one Word of it.** God doesn't walk back the truth to appease us and our self-promoting, self-glorifying ways.

The God who does not walk back His words also does not walk back His presence or His promises.

And so when faced with our sin, rebellion, and death Jesus said: *I will do it. I will come down from heaven to save.*

Jesus did not walk back from being born into a sinful world;

He did not walk back from the temptation, the hate, the scourging, not even a gruesome death on a cross.

The Holy One of God did not walk back from taking our sin and uncleanness upon Himself;

He did not walk back from the prospect of being forsaken by His Father for you. No, He willingly, and according to the book of Hebrews, joyfully did all that for you. **PAUSE**

Many walked away and stopped following Him that day, but He would not walk away from them. He died for all, including those who took offense at His Word of Truth.

And know this as well: **He will not walk away from you.** You who have come here after another week wallowing in sin. Another week of failing to love God above all things and failing to love your neighbor as yourself.

Another week of parsing words to get what you want. Another week of unclean desires, wicked thoughts, grudges and bitterness. Yes, you've come here this morning marinated in your sins, reeking of those sins.

You walk in here like a bum off the streets of hell . . . **and still, your Savior does not walk back from you.**

Instead, He embraces you with His love, kisses you with His forgiveness, and rejoices over you at His Table.

Jesus came into this world for you, and He's still coming for you. There's no place that He'd rather be this morning than here, and nothing He'd rather be doing than forgiving and feeding prodigal children like us.

That's who your God is. A God who won't walk back from you. A God who loves bums and serves sinners. A God who came into the world to die, not condemn; whose glory is the cross. A God who has a lifetime of patience with you.

If you don't know God like that, then you won't believe even, as Jesus said, **even if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before**, even if you see Him rise from the dead.

Without faith, none of those blessings Jesus wants to give you are accessible. You'll grumble, like the people back then, that God isn't being very God-like.

You'll complain that you're not getting what you deserve. You'll think you're not getting the credit and praise you think you have coming.

You'll be offended at being called a sinner and walk away.

But if you don't walk away, you'll hear the most wonderful words. ***I baptize you. I forgive you.***

***Today you will be with me in Paradise. This is My Body, this is My Blood. The feast is ready; come to the feast.***

These are **the words of eternal life**. Gift words. Jesus-for-you words. Words uttered and recorded so that you too **believe and know that Jesus is the Holy One of God.**

So that you too will believe that the baby in the manger is the Holy One of God. So that you too will believe that the man rejected in His own hometown is the Holy One of God.

So you'll believe that the one hanging out with prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners, and lepers is the Holy One of God.

That the man condemned as a criminal being scourged and mocked and then hung up on a cross is the Holy One of God.

The Holy One of God **for you.**

Jesus came for you who are unholy, to make you holy, with a holiness you do not have and cannot have apart from Him.

That's the truth, and Jesus will not walk it back. He is faithful to His Father and steadfast in his love for you.

And so His call goes out still today: don't walk away; repent. Don't walk away, listen. Hear His words of eternal life.

And through those words, the Spirit will work. and the Father will draw us to Himself. That's the only way. To walk away is to walk back to sin and death, **but faith comes by hearing the Word of God.**

So, hear. You may not understand everything and have all the answers. That's okay. You don't have to have them; God does. He who knows all things and knows you, His child. He knows your need and has come to fill you with Himself.

So if you're ever tempted to walk back from Jesus, do this instead: walk back to your baptism, and remember your adoption there as a child of God and the forgiveness He has promised you.

Walk back to the mercy promised you in absolution. And walk back to this altar, to the Body and Blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

And you have His promise: that in this eating and drinking there is forgiveness, life, and salvation. *As often* as you do this.

For the flesh of the One who won your forgiveness on the cross is placed into your mouth. The life-blood of the One who poured out His life for you is poured over your lips.

The One who gave everything for you, holding back not one little thing, holds back nothing here either. Forgiveness, life, and salvation yours. And He will not walk it back. **PAUSE**

So, whatever happened to those folks that day who walked away? We're not told. But I'll bet Jesus prayed for them. For Jesus went to the cross and died for their sin too.

And maybe later they came back. Perhaps some of those offended folks were among the 3,000 who were baptized at Pentecost.

In the same way, He prays for you, just as He died for you. He prays that His Spirit will protect you from satanic lies and overcome the sin that is part and parcel of being a human

And what about those who walk away today? Well, don't give up on them either. Pray for them.

And tell them, when you have the chance, of a God who doesn't walk it back, and what good news that is for them. Tell them that His gifts are here for sinners like us.

Tell them that His life is here for us who are subject to death, but that all who eat of His body and drink of his blood will live forever in eternal blessedness.

**AMEN**