

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK THIRTEEN: THE CROWD LEAVES JESUS

READING

60 Many of his disciples said, “This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?” 61 Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? 63 The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But some of you do not believe me.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning which ones didn’t believe, and he knew who would betray him.) 65 Then he said, “That is why I said that people can’t come to me unless the Father gives them to me.” 66 At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. 67 Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “Are you also going to leave?” 68 Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. 69 We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.” John 6 (NLT)

TEACHING

Jesus had just finished talking about “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood.” You can understand why the crowd was uncomfortable. Of course, Jesus didn’t mean for them to literally do those things; He was speaking symbolically of our need to look to him as the only source of strength and life for our hearts. Remember, Jesus is the bread of life who came down from heaven for you and me.

At this point, the crowd that chased after Jesus hoping that he would do another amazing miracle decided to stop following Jesus. They were following Jesus on their terms and once it didn’t serve their selfish purposes anymore, they walked away. Jesus wants us to follow him on his terms and to trust that he knows what we really need. This must have been a shocking turn of events for the disciples closest to Jesus. They watched popularity and fame walk away as the crowd dwindled down from thousands to just them. And Jesus wondered if they would leave too: “Are you also going to leave?”

Peter’s answer reveals the heart of someone in love with Jesus: Where else would we go? No one and nothing else can lead us into truth and life. We believe in you and we won’t leave you now or ever. A few years later, Peter actually would leave Jesus, but Jesus never left Peter. And it’s God’s faithfulness to us that causes faithfulness in us.

RESPONSE

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OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Have you ever wanted to quit or give up on a commitment?
- What did you do?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who stopped following Jesus?
- In this story, who stayed with Jesus?

CHILDREN:

- What did the crowds do once they didn't like what Jesus said?
- What did Jesus ask his twelve disciples?
- What did Peter say to Jesus?

TEENAGERS:

- Why did the crowd stop following Jesus?
- Why did the Twelve stay with Jesus?
- What is difficult about following Jesus?
- What gives you strength to follow?

ADULTS:

- When have you been tempted to stop following Jesus? How did you endure?
- Take the time to tell your children about your own moments of decision to follow.

PRAYER

God,

Thank you that you never give up on me. Help me to not give up on you. Thank you that your Holy Spirit was sent to help me love you and know truth. Break my heart for the people around me who are walking away from you. Give me opportunities to point them to Jesus and wisdom to know how to do so. Let my words be filled with truth and grace just like yours always are. Thank you that "you have the words that give eternal life." Help me to not look to lesser gods for life, but to always find it in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

In this passage, Jesus highlights the work of the Trinity in salvation. In verse 63, he teaches that only the Spirit can give eternal life. We cannot save ourselves, we cannot earn salvation, and we cannot make bring our dead hearts to life. Only the Holy Spirit can do that in his work of regeneration. In verse 65, Jesus explains the work of the Father in salvation. The Father gives to Jesus all those who belong to him. The exact workings of salvation are a mystery, but we can see in this text that it is always God's work. We are grateful recipients and responders to his wonderful plan of redemption.