

“Who Else But Jesus?”

John 6:60-71

If there is one question that sums up the contemporary search for God, for meaning, for purpose, for what is real and enduring in life, it would be the question asked almost 2000 years ago by Peter in verse 68: “To whom shall we go?” Or to personalize it, “To whom shall I go?” Our pluralistic culture responds by saying, “There are an infinite number of answers to that question. You have to decide what answer is right for you, whatever or whoever it is that makes you happy, fulfilled, satisfied. It might be eastern or new age religion, it might be Islam, it might be Christianity, be it Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, or a mix and match of any and all of these. Your answer might not be religion at all. You may find the answer to your question by casting off everything that restricts your freedom. You may answer it by investing your life into your children, or your parents, or your job. The problem with the pluralistic response to “To whom shall I go,” is that there is no proof, no guarantee that the answer you find will be the satisfying end to your search. Please do not doubt that many, many people are asking, searching, yearning for the answer to the question, “To whom shall I go?” Peter’s question is very relevant, very contemporary to many people in our world. It may be a question you’re wrestling with today. Before we get to Peter’s answer, I want to look at what Peter had witnessed in the previous 48 hours leading up to this incident.

On day one, Jesus had taken the bread and fish of a little boy and had fed 5,000 men. It’s estimated that in miraculously multiplying the little boy’s lunch, if you include women and children, Jesus had probably fed at least 12,000, and maybe as many 20,000 people that day. The huge crowd is overwhelmed by this incredible miracle. In verse 14 they proclaim, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Knowing that they wanted to make Him king, Jesus slips away from them. On day two, discovering that He has gone, the crowd searches for and finds Him. Jesus is certainly at the height of His popularity. How does He take advantage of the opportunity presented to Him by these people who are apparently committed to following Him to the point of wanting to make Him their king? You’ll note on your outline that as the first point I’ve asked the question, “What if?” What if Jesus, at the beginning of verse 25, had said to all these people, “I know you’re basically good people who love God and want to do what’s right. I know that’s tough, and I’ve come to help you. I want you to know that you have the power to realize your goals and dreams, to live the best life you can. I want to help you be happy and satisfied and content. I won’t make any demands on you, but I’ve got some great wisdom for you that can turn your life around.” What do you think the response would have been? I have to think that within a couple of hours, the size of that crowd would have at least doubled.

But of course, that’s not what Jesus said, is it? I raise this “what if?” because I’m afraid there are many Christian leaders and speakers in our country (who, by the way, are very popular) who are pursuing that “what if” scenario that has little to do with Jesus Christ. Instead, Jesus takes advantage of this opportunity to say some things that are described in verse 60 as “hard.” First, there’s what He said about Himself. From verse 25 to our passage today, He makes it very clear that He didn’t come as a helper, as a counselor to share wisdom with us. He came as the “true bread that came down from heaven” (vv. 33, 38, 51). To say this is to say, “I existed before I was born. I am God, and as God I came into the world to take on human nature. I’m special and unique.” For people who knew He was from Nazareth, that was hard for the people to hear. Second, there’s what He said about His followers. He didn’t say they were “good people” who had the power within them to “love God” and who just needed some help. There was nothing in them that was good, there was no power in them that enabled them to find and come to and love God. No, the only way they could please God was if God, by His grace first came into their lives. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (verse 44). For people who like to hear good things said about themselves, those were hard words. Lastly, there is what Jesus said about eternal life, the life that is the answer to the question about meaning, purpose, and God. He did not say, “Try this divine insight into living. If you want to find the answers to the big questions of life, just change

this about your thinking or your outlook on life.” Instead, Jesus made this demand, “You have to believe in Me, you have to enter into a relationship with Me whereby I am as real to your life as what you eat and drink. You can’t have life unless you come and believe and commit to me in a real and radical way. Unless you do that, you have no life in you at all.” For people who like to be in control, who don’t like demands placed on them, those are hard words. Jesus’ words were hard, not hard to understand, but hard to accept, hard to embrace, hard to acknowledge and apply to their lives. Because they didn’t hear what they wanted to hear, almost all in that crowd rejected Jesus and left Him. They would pursue someone else in their search for God, for meaning, for purpose and hope in life.

And Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks, “Do you want to leave me, too?” Peter answers the question with his own question: “Lord, to whom shall we go?” and then he makes three affirmations, three declarations of truth, that I’d like to address in reverse order. First, by calling Jesus “The Holy One of God,” Peter says, we believe and we know that You are Who You say You are. Second, Peter says, we believe and know that eternal life is found in You. Third, as we believe and know these truths, we realize there is no one else, no place else where we can find what we have found in You. Peter’s declaration is that there is only one answer to the question, “To whom shall we go?” It was said by the ancient Greeks that a man would always be unsatisfied with human food once he had tasted the food of the gods. That’s a description of where Peter and the others were. That’s a description of where you are if you are a Christian. Jesus said, “Drink of me, and I will satisfy your thirst; feed on Me, and I will satisfy your hunger.” As you have done that you enjoy heavenly food. Anything else is flat and tasteless and unsatisfying by comparison, because no one else promises eternal life.

To be a Christian is not easy. It takes no less than a miracle (that is, a supernatural intervention of God in your life) for you to accept what is naturally unacceptable about being a believer in Jesus Christ: That you are powerless, in need of help in this search for life and meaning and purpose; that God by His grace and love and power has provided that help in Jesus Christ; that it is only as you receive God’s goodness to you in Jesus Christ, as you believe and take Him into your life and give Him control of your life that you become a Christian. All that is offensive, unacceptable unless you have received the miracle, and with the miracle of Jesus you find the life and satisfaction and meaning and hope and joy that are found only in Him.

In closing, you can be sure that there were many things that Peter and the others did not understand about Jesus. I’m sure he was as bewildered and puzzled as anyone else. But there was something about Jesus that made Peter commit his life to Him. The point here is this: when it is all said and done, Christianity is not a list of do this, don’t do that. It’s not philosophy which we accept, nor is it self-help wisdom we apply to our lives. Christianity is a personal response to Jesus Christ. Let me ask you: Is your response to Jesus’ question: “Do you want to leave Me?” the same as Peter’s response? “Jesus, You are God, eternal life is found in You, there is no one else, no place else for me to go.” If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ if you have not experienced the miracle of coming to Him, believing in Him, and receiving God into your life, is it possible that the Spirit of God wants to do that great work in your life today? Won’t you consider that possibility? If you are a Christian, know that it is your responsibility to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ, and in the eternal life that is yours in your Jesus. And it is your responsibility, our responsibility to declare the glorious good news of Christ and that life to a world that is asking questions that only He can answer!