

## “Will You Also Go Away?”

John 6:60-71

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### Additional Notes:

P 13 Passage to use by way of comparison with the kinds of “disciples” we find in John 6:60-71:

The four soils of Luke 8:11-15

P 13 John 6:63 “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” Cross references

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What’s the point of believing in God if **your** life and **his** don’t intersect?

If his life has no bearing on your life, what’s the point of believing in him?

So if you believe in a God whose existence **does** have some bearing on yours, sooner or later you must deal with the question of your relationship with him.

Most people who go to church think of themselves as Christians to at least some degree.

And since Jesus Christ is **the** defining person of Christianity, most who call themselves Christians would admit that they are disciples of Jesus at some level or another.

So what kind of disciple are you?

In the text before us today are at least three kinds.

There is, first of all, the crowd; secondly, there is Peter speaking for the Twelve; and thirdly there is Judas.

Watch and listen to each kind described.

John 6:60-71 (Video, which runs 2 minutes, or printed text)

Jesus was popular; great crowds followed him, enamored of his teaching, attracted by the miracles and excited about the possibilities for themselves if Jesus were to become their leader.

The author of the Gospel of John covers the first two years of Jesus' ministry much more quickly than do the other gospel writers.

And so when we come to chapter 6 we are completing the second year of Jesus' ministry and it is only a year until his crucifixion.

In the Gospel of John, then, we more quickly hear the full import of what Jesus means when he says that people must believe him/follow him if they are to have a relationship with God.

Earlier in this chapter, which we looked at last week, Jesus put a fine point on his definition of what it means to believe in him – it is to sell out to him body and soul.

Now today we see the results of that definition:

6:66 “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”

We have just come through an election cycle when candidates promised anything and everything to increase the crowds.

Jesus does the opposite.

But what turned the crowds away?

Look at verse 60-61 “On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

Now apparently the word “disciple” is used quite broadly in this context.

In verse 64 Jesus said that some might be disciples but they are not believers “Yet there are some of you who do not believe.”

So in this context, these people are “disciples” in that they liked to listen to Jesus and they liked what he did for them, but they were not committing themselves to him.

So again, what turned them off?

The crowd said, “**This** is a hard teaching.” And Jesus asked, “Does **this** offend you?”

What is “this” that is “hard” and “offends?”

We find the answer in what Jesus has just said to them in verses 25-59 which we looked at last week.

First, Jesus claimed uniqueness about his nature that put him in a class with God and much greater than any human prophet, even Moses.

He was not just a servant of God, sent by God, he had come down from heaven.

That uniqueness of Jesus, as God, is a stumbling block to many today and it certainly was then.

Secondly, Jesus claimed he was **the only way** to God the Father.

Acceptance of him was essential to having a relationship with God.

That was then, and is yet, an even greater stumbling block to people than Jesus claiming to be God.

Lastly, in the verses we looked at last week, Jesus described the relationship **we must have with him** if we are going to be his followers.

Jesus described that relationship in graphic metaphor:

John 6:53-55 “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. <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>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.”

As I described it last week, the response Jesus calls for is to:

- accept him, trust him, believe him,
- embrace him, draw him into our lives, follow him,
- obey him, engage him, remain in him,
- make him the center of our lives, the reason for living,
- the arbiter of every decision, the very Lord of our lives.

It is to make him a part of us as much as the food we eat becomes part of us.

It is to continually feed on him as much as we continually need food and drink; it is to learn from him, talk with him, and respond to him.

Jesus is describing the closest possible relationship.

Those truths are what the crowd find “hard.”

It wasn't that it was hard to understand.

As *Mark Twain*, a notorious unbeliever, once said about the Bible, "It is not the things I don't understand that bother me; it is the things that I do understand." (From Robert Rayburn

<http://www.faihtacoma.org/sermons/John/John23.6.60-71.Aug20.00.htm>

They understood Jesus full well – they just didn't like it – it offended their sense of self-determination.

No way was Jesus going to be Lord of their lives!

Now it seems to me that Jesus could have wisely backed off at this point and saved his popularity.

He could have lowered the standard and saved his reputation.

- Wouldn't it be okay if they followed from a distance?
- What if they believe in him but run their own lives?
- Wouldn't it be okay to be a little less fanatical about this?

But Jesus doesn't back off, he ups the ante; he presses the definition of what following him means.

**First of all he does it with this statement in 6:62 “What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”**

I believe Jesus is saying something like this: If you are offended by my claiming to be God who came down from heaven and that you must believe and follow me as closely as I have described **then wait until you hear where following me will lead you – it will lead you to the cross.**

I'm going to ask you to **give up your life for me** after I've given up my life for you.”

Now you may ask, “How did you get the cross out of Jesus’ words about his ascension?”

In the Gospel of John, Jesus closely connects his ascension, that is his return to the glory of heaven, with his death.

He has already done that in John 3:13-15 “No one has ever gone into heaven (“ascended” as in 6:62) except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.<sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,<sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Using the illustration of the bronze snake that Moses lifted up on a pole so that everyone who looked to it, trusting God, would be saved from death, Jesus said he would be lifted up on a pole, crucified, so that those who look to him will be saved.

With this play on words, Jesus speaks of his crucifixion **on the way** to his ascension.

A few weeks later Jesus would say it this way: John 12:23-24 “Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.<sup>24</sup> I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

And just seconds after that he would add, John 12:32-34 “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”<sup>33</sup> He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.”

So Jesus juxtaposes his crucifixion and his ascension to glory.  
Jesus would return to glory by way of the cross.

Now here’s the part people don’t want to accept: John 12:25, Jesus said, “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.<sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

On another occasion Jesus would say it this way: Matthew 10:37-39 “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;

anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus says I'm not asking you just to believe I exist – of course I exist. I am also not asking you just to think of yourself as being in a nice relationship with me wherein I supply your every want.

- I'm asking you to sell yourself out to me, to follow me to death itself, if necessary.
- I'm asking you to acknowledge and act on the fact that I am Lord of every aspect of your life.
- I'm asking you to trust me with your life.

But the higher the demands Jesus makes, the fewer people are interested. The closer Jesus gets to the cross the smaller are the crowds.

**But there is a second statement Jesus makes by way of describing what it means to follow him:**

6:63-65 “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. 65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

Now this is largely a re-statement of what he said earlier in this chapter.

God reminds them that coming to Jesus does not happen unless God initiates it, unless the Spirit of God gives them spiritual life to believe.

“The flesh counts for nothing” is another way of saying what Jesus told Nicodemus in 3:6-7 “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

Jesus says, “I told you no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him,” and now I tell you that only the Spirit gives life.

I think Jesus is saying to the crowd, unless you understand that you are absolutely dependent on God, unless you humbly accept that you cannot earn your relationship to God, it is apparent that the Spirit of God has not granted you faith to believe – and you don't believe.

To follow Jesus is to always remember with the hymn writer –  
 “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling.”

But when these “disciples” learned the true cost of discipleship, they turned away.

One man wrote, “Here we come upon a truth that re-emerges in every age. Time and again it is not the intellectual difficulty of accepting Christ which keeps men from becoming Christians; it is the height of Christ's moral demand... Any honest thinker will accept (that there is mystery about Christianity), but “to this day many a man's refusal of Christ comes, not because Christ puzzles and baffles his intellect, but because Christ challenges and condemns his life.” (William Barclay, in Leon Morris, *John*, 383)

How many are in the church calling themselves “disciples” but are not following Jesus?

### **But there is another kind of disciple described for us here in John 6.**

John 6:67-69 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.<sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

To make certain that we don't confuse Peter and the inner circle with the crowd already called “disciples,” John makes it clear that Jesus is here addressing “the Twelve.”

Now these 12 “disciples,” with Peter as their spokesman, are examples of those whom the Father has enabled, whom the Spirit of God has brought to life.

Jesus has already told us that he knows who **doesn't** really believe and by deduction we know that he also knows who **does** really believe.

And so Jesus asks a question he already knows the answer to –

“You do not want to leave too, do you?”

Jesus asks it for their sakes, not his.

It’s a great question and it elicits the very thoughts that I think Jesus desired.

With that question Peter apparently considers the options – where would he go, to whom would he go?

I suspect only some of you will identify with me in this:

I sometimes find myself on the cusp of unbelief, mentally dwelling in that unsettled margin between belief and unbelief.

And in my unsettledness, I do consider the options.

- If not Jesus, who?
- If not Christianity, what?

For those of you who became Christians as adults, would you want to go back to your former way of life?

For me, would I go to and adopt the secular ideologies of our age (world peace, inevitable human progress, maximum human freedom)?

Would I go to some other religion?

Would I go to the futility of trying to be good enough for God? (Boice, 234)

Where would I go? What would I do?

I might say, “I’ll just live life and stop worrying about such things.”

Then I say to myself, “What then?”

“I’ll just go about my business and enjoy each day.”

“What then?”

“I’ll retire early and take life easy, travel, play golf, play with my grandkids and live the good life.”

“What then?”

“I’ll pass away in the comfort of my own home and with my family around.”

“What then?”

The grace of God draws me back to agree with Peter:

6:68-69 “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.<sup>69</sup> We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

On another occasion when Peter made the same confession that we see in verse 68, Jesus said this:

Matthew 16:17 “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

In my moments of questioning, I know it is the grace of God that holds me to belief and trust.

- Jesus, you alone have the words of eternal life.
- You alone are the way to God.
- You alone can actually forgive sins, give us spiritual life, enable us to grow, and produce the results you promise.
- We declare, with Peter, as true truth that you, Jesus, are the Holy One of God.

As I said, I think it was for their sake Jesus asked the question of whether they too wanted to leave; **it was to cause them to realize afresh the reality and importance of their relationship with him.**

It is why we should continually take the Lord’s Supper, sing the hymns that speak the truth about God and his saving work, and repeat the Apostle’s Creed; by these we reaffirm our own faith in Jesus.

And realizing who Jesus is and who we are by his grace, we recommit ourselves to following him by his definition of following.

**But there is yet a third kind of “disciple” described for us here.**

6:70-71 “Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” <sup>Jn 6:71</sup> (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

As I tried to show you already, I think Jesus spoke of his impending crucifixion when he talked about his ascension.

And with his death in mind, in verse 64, Jesus already knew who didn't really believe and who would betray him.

Now here he describes that "disciple" that is part of the inner circle.

This is a man who gave so many indications of being the real thing.

He traveled with them, he preached with them, he was part of the miracle work the disciples did.

He must have been able to use all the right language.

And it is interesting that Judas didn't bail out when the crowd did.

He went almost all the way.

But when it appeared that Jesus was heading for defeat and death; when it became apparent to Judas that Jesus wasn't going to give Judas what he wanted;

when loyalty to Jesus would be dangerous to his reputation and maybe even his life;

entrepreneur that he was, he decided to at least get something for all his effort – so he betrayed Jesus for money.

How are we to understand Judas; was he not a Christian?

Jesus made it clear he never was.

At the Last Supper, just before Jesus "outs" Judas, he says this, John 13:10-11, "Jesus said to him (Peter), 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, **but not all of you.**' 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean.'" (James Gunn in sermon on this text at Monergism.org)

Later John would describe such defection this way: 1 John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

And in very strong language the Apostle Peter would write of such people: 2 Peter 2:20-22 “If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.<sup>21</sup> It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.<sup>22</sup> Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’”

Judas was not the only one - There have been many, including elders and preachers who have gone so far and then dropped out.

One pastor wrote, “And how many such people there have been in the church of God through the ages: people who represented themselves as Christians, were accepted by others – at least others in their circle – as Christians, but who betrayed the Lord with a kiss and when push came to shove their loyalty to Jesus Christ proved to be nothing but empty words. As the Bible never tires of warning us there are many such folk in the church. Some of them will have their disloyalty smoked out during the course of their lives. Some test of loyalty will come and they will fail it. But others will not be discovered to have been hypocrites until all is said and done and all is made clear at the judgment day. “Depart from me, I never knew you,” Jesus will say. And if there are more terrible words in all of the book of God than those, I would like to know which they are!” Robert Rayburn in sermon from this text at Monergism.org

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

What kind of disciple are you?

Are you merely part of the crowd, never really following?

Or are you like Judas, fooling everyone around you and yourself?

Or are you like Peter - even if you don't fully understand you  
have decided to follow Jesus, to sell out to him, body and soul –  
he alone has the words of eternal life?

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## **Additional Notes:**

### **Passage to use by way of comparison with the kinds of “disciples” we find in John 6:60-71:**

The four soils of Luke 8:11-15 “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. <sup>3</sup> Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. <sup>14</sup> The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. <sup>15</sup> But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

### **John 6:63 “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”**

See Deuteronomy 8:3 “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” James 1:18 “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth.” 1 Pet. 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” 2 Pet. 1:4 “He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature...”

### **Why did Jesus choose Judas to be one of the twelve?**

1. Greater opportunity for Jesus to live out his perfection. Even with a Judas always there, pretending, criticizing – a constant trial in Jesus life, yet he remained focused and faithful. (You too may have people always around you who try you – will you remain faithful?)
2. Judas provided an impartial witness to Jesus’ divinity – He was close, very close to Jesus and in the end he would testify, “I have betrayed innocent blood (Matthew 27:4).

3. Judas displays the awful character and destiny of sin – No one is more despicable than a traitor, especially the traitor of so good a person as Jesus. We see the extent of our own sinful characters in the sin of Judas.
4. Judas is solemn warning to other sinners who think that by close proximity to religion they are okay. One could not have been closer than Judas and yet so far because he refused to truly trust and follow Jesus.
5. Judas shows us that hypocrites are always present.

(Boice, 241-242 following A.W. Pink's sermon on this text found at monergism.org)

### **Scripture texts that bear on the discussion of Judas and election (God's choice):**

Mt 27:3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. Mt 27:4 "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." Mt 27:5 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. Mt 27:6 The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." Mt 27:7 So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. Mt 27:8 That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Mt 27:9 **Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:** "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, Mt 27:10 and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Luke 22:1-6 "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, Lk 22:2 and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Lk 22:3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. Lk 22:4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. Lk 22:5 They were delighted and agreed to give him money. Lk 22:6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present

John 13:2 "The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

John 13:18-21 "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. **But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'**" 19 "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He..." 21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me..." 26 Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. 27 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly..." 30 As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night."

6:70 says Jesus "chose" the twelve (including Judas).

John 13:18 says Jesus is not referring to all 12. He knows the kind of men he has chosen and he knows also who it is who will betray him (v26 "he gave it to Judas..."). And also says this fulfills Scripture which says that a close companion ("shares my bread") would kick him (like a horse "lifting up it's heel). Jesus tells them in advance that this will happen so that will believe Jesus is who he says he is.

John 17:12 "While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except **the one doomed to destruction** so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

"one doomed to destruction" (literally "son of destruction") – speaking not of his being chosen for that purpose but that Judas, following his own nature as a son of the devil (as we all are before God intervenes) willingly betrayed Jesus. So would we all, were it not for God's keeping power.

God, knowing all things, knew that Judas would betray Jesus and he incorporated betrayal in the OT prophecies regarding what would happen to Jesus.

These verses don't force you to a double-predestination.

But it is granted that God did not intervene in Judas' situation and turn him around – just as God did not with the others who turned away from Jesus.

Acts 1:15-20 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) <sup>Ac 1:16</sup> and said, "**Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—**" <sup>Ac 1:17</sup> **he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.**" <sup>Ac 1:18</sup> (With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>Ac 1:19</sup> Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>Ac 1:20</sup> "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, " 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, " 'May another take his place of leadership.'

Romans 9:14-24

*14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*

*15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."*

*16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*

*17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

*19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"*

*20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"*

*21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

*22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,*

*23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,*

*24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

On this subject of divine election, it may be helpful to re-read the sermon on Romans 9 from January 6 ,2008 available online at

[www.soundliving.org](http://www.soundliving.org).

**Peter's confessions in John 6 and Matthew 16 are they not from the same incident?**

Regarding whether this is the same "confession" that Peter makes in Matthew 16:13ff please see Leon Morris' (*John*, 388-89 footnote) excellent defense of this being a different incident.