

John 6:60-70(NIV) ⁶⁰On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” ⁶¹Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁴Yet 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. ⁶⁵He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” ⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ⁶⁷“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The disciples question the teaching Jesus just gave. “This is a hard teaching.” “Who can accept it.” When you and I are reading the Bible, we are literally reading about people, places, and events that occurred 2000 to 4000 years ago or longer. I ordered two books this week that give great helps to the hard sayings of the Bible, those most difficult to interpret. Jesus is the master teacher. There is no one with better teaching skills than Jesus. He is the finest communicator of all time. The Bible is fully inspired by God but that does not mean we will have full understanding of what it says in this life. For example, Jesus says, **Matthew 5:29-30(NIV)** *²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

I would call this a hard teaching, impossible to accept. Thank the Lord for Biblical scholars, intelligent men and women who study the Scriptures full time and give us great helps. My office is full of Bible commentaries, Bible Handbooks, Bible Overviews, Hebrew and Greek dictionaries, and more. These are extremely helpful tools that help us understand what the original authors intended for us to understand.

If I were to say to you, “brother, your eye has caused you to sin gouge it out right now.” If I were to speak those words, I think everyone would get up and leave. The nurses in the church would dial 911 for me to be taken directly to the hospital. Jesus does not literally want us to gouge our eyes out. Jesus is calling us to repent of our sin and be forgiven. Jesus is calling us to cut out the sin and walk in obedience. Dr Stein writes, “Within the four canonical Gospels we find numerous occasions of exaggeration on the lips of Jesus. At times, the exaggeration is hyperbolic in that what is commanded or portrayed is literally impossible or inconceivable” (Robert H. Stein, *Difficult Sayings In The Gospels*, pg.19). Jesus says, “*It is easier for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God*” (Mark 10:25). I cannot thread a needle with a tiny thread let alone see a camel walking through that eye on the needle. Jesus is stating the extreme to make a point. Rich people often put their faith in riches and not God. Dr Stein continues, “At other times the exaggeration is more of an overstatement in that what is commanded or portrayed is possible or conceivable, but a literal fulfillment or enactment would be contrary to the intention of Jesus.”

If I were to say, “When I am preaching, no one listens to me,” that is not literally true. What I mean is at any time I am preaching, it is easy for you to nod off or put your attention elsewhere or daydream. But there are those who listen intently to every word wanting to hear something of God.

After Jesus said what he did in John chapter 6, many were turned off to Jesus and left. I know of no greater evangelist than Jesus. The people rejected not only his message, but they rejected Jesus as a person. **John 6:52-59(NIV)** ⁵²*Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”* ⁵³*Jesus said to them, “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.* ⁵⁴*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* ⁵⁵*For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.* ⁵⁶*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks*

my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷*Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.* ⁵⁸*This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.* ⁵⁹*He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.*

Hearing these words, it is understandable that the people were confused. “What does Jesus mean by this?” Some took the teaching of Jesus and called the Christians a bunch of cannibals, “eating flesh and drinking blood.” We know what Jesus meant. Every word Jesus spoke is the true word of God. Believing in and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ gives to us life eternal. We teach that Christ’s body and blood is somehow in that wafer and drink. It is the person, Jesus, who saves us for all eternity. **John 1:12(NIV)** ¹²*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— .*

God the Father enables you to come to Jesus as He give gives to you the grace to believe in and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. In Holy Communion we are taking in the Presence of Jesus, his body and blood. We are not cannibals. We belong to Jesus for He has received us into his family. We have 2000 years of church history helping us understand these difficult passages.

When you are reading through the entire Bible, please do not get discouraged by the difficult passages. Luther tells us we properly interpret the more difficult passages with those that are easier to interpret. The Holy Spirit does help us to understand what we are reading, and the Holy Spirit can use Biblical tools to help us interpret. I so appreciate all the study Bibles and the Life Application Bibles. It is like having a tutor right with you and I highly recommend them.

Friends, Jesus was speaking words of Spirit and life. You have to have the Holy Spirit inside of you to understand spiritual things, things of God. Sometimes when you are reading the Bible it becomes so personal to you because the Holy Spirit is working big time in your soul.

You are learning things about God, about yourself, about this world, and more. Jesus gives words that give life. These are words of eternal life. ⁶³*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.”*

The listeners had had enough of the teaching of Jesus and left. Only the 12 stood with Jesus and one of them would later betray Jesus. Jesus asks, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

William Barclay writes, “In the last analysis Christianity is not a philosophy which we accept, nor a theory to which we give allegiance.” “It is a personal response to Jesus Christ.” “It is the allegiance and the love which a person gives because his or her heart will not allow anything else” (William Barclay, John, pg. 230).

During Lent we spend time in self-examination. We take deliberate time to evaluate one’s relationship with God. We ask ourselves questions like, “Jesus, please show me where You are not number one in my life.” “Please expose my idols.” We ask the Holy Spirit to clean us out and remove sin from our lives. We become more aware where we are not obeying God.

It is not uncommon these days for people to leave the church and never return. Friends, only Jesus has the Spirit and new life that your soul is hungry for and yearning for. Now is not the time to leave Jesus, but to embrace Him all the more. Jesus is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. The trouble is so many prefer the darkness of their sin, more than the Light, more than Jesus. That is why people walk away into the darkness of unbelief. May that never happen to any of us listening to this sermon. Amen and Amen.