

“Trust in Him” John 6:60-71 11/17/19 Steve Harden

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” 70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

This is the word off the Lord.
Amen.

I don't know if you've noticed just how quickly life can turn around sometimes, sometimes on a dime. You can be headed in one direction and you can get a medical diagnosis, or someone you love can get that diagnosis and it stops you in your tracks. Or maybe the job that you'd counted on having for a long, long time, suddenly isn't there anymore. Sometimes, life turns on a dime. It certainly seems to be the case here in John 6 that that's what is happening. Life is changing so very, very quickly for the disciples. One day Jesus feeds maybe up to 15,000 people with five loaves and two fish, and he feeds them and there's 12 baskets run over and people recognize that okay, Jesus has done this. And they want to make Him king. And the disciples are thinking, 'Yes! Now's our time! Now's when we're going to take over!' And the very next day, 14,988 of them leave, and it's back down to the twelve. I keep coming back, over and over again, as we've been looking at John 6, and this will be the last time we'll be looking at it this year, what the disciples must have thought and felt in that time. Can you imagine the elation when they saw those 15,000 people scattered out over the, it was 5,000 families, so I'm saying if there's three in a family, right? 5,000 families scattered out over the Galilean hills and everything that Jesus is doing, and they want to make him king! They say, 'Yes! We're getting traction now! The polls are up! They're in our favor! Now's the time, now's when Jesus is going to reign as king.'

And then there was that thing about the boat on the sea of Galilee overnight, and how they'd worked all night long rowing, and had only got halfway across the sea, and then Jesus comes strolling on the water. Blows their mind! And then when He gets in the boat they're immediately on the shore. He accomplished in a moment what they couldn't do all night long. So, in their sleep deprived state they look across that next morning and they see the boats coming

across from the crowd that Jesus had fed, they were coming to seek Jesus again. They're thinking, 'This has got to be good. This is going to be a good day.'

And then Jesus started teaching in the synagogue there in Capernaum, started making some hard statements, I mean, hard statements. Eat my flesh. Drink my blood. 'Jesus what are you doing? Your press secretary didn't approve those, right? What are you saying?' And by the end of the day all of them were gone and it was just back down to the twelve. Just twelve disciples. And we know, that one of them was a snake in the grass. Life turned on a dime for them. It certainly doesn't seem to be a way to build a kingdom. So, what are we supposed to do with this? What are we supposed to do with this seeming failure? Jesus drove them away, but maybe a better question for us this morning is, what do you do with failure? How do you deal when success seems right there in your grasp, and then all of a sudden, it's gone? When you fail and when things don't work out the way you want them to? I think this passage will help. I want to explain a few things about the passage, just to kind of tell the story, and then at the end then I'll draw two implications that seem to be appropriate for me and I think they will be for you. I'm going to look at first Jesus' reaction, and then Jesus' rejection. Very simple.

Okay so first of all, Jesus' reaction. He was offending everyone! Across the board. Jesus was offending. In verse 60, we see that they say, "This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?" Other versions say, "This is a hard saying, who can understand it?" That sheds a little bit of life on it. It's not that they didn't understand what Jesus was saying, understand, they understood exactly what He was saying; they just didn't like it. It was like they were saying, "Who can sit still for this kind of stuff? What are you doing?" They didn't like what they were hearing. They rejected it. It was repugnant to them. So, the obvious question then is, what was Jesus saying that was repugnant to them?

Let me suggest three things from our text. First of all, Jesus claims to be God. And that's kind of hard. Verse 33, 38 and 51 all say, Jesus said, "I am the true bread that came down out of heaven." And He's saying He's God and He has equal status with God, and He came down from heaven. And that was a tough pill for them to swallow. I mean, think about it. That was enough to throw a good Jew into a fit, right? They wouldn't even speak the word of the name of God. They took out the vowels. They wouldn't even speak His name, and yet this man standing in front of them was saying He was from Him, and He was equal with Him. Do you see how repugnant that would be to them? The crowd obviously understood, or they wouldn't have left. They knew what He was saying. In other gospels, it says they picked up stones to stone Him when they heard what He had to say. The problem again was not that they didn't understand, the problem was they understood and rejected Him.

Then Jesus went on and said, 'I was preexistent. Before I came to this earth, I was with Him.' Look at verses 61 and 62. Now listen closely with preexistence in mind. "But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this?" Now listen. "Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?" I was here. Then I came down, and I'll go back there. And that blew their minds. You take offense that I'm the true bread of life? How about this one? Jesus says. Now they didn't know He was talking about His death, burial, and resurrection, and then His ascension that over 400 people would see. He was saying, 'I will show myself being ascended back into heaven.' They were just not buying Jesus' preexistence and His deity.

The second thing, Jesus claims to be the only source of eternal life. Look at verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." *I am* the living bread.

He claims exclusivity. Jesus says, 'I and I alone am the means to salvation. If you obtain heaven, it's going to be because of me.' If you were in His audience, think about it! You are the only source of eternal life? But then, it flew in the face of everything they believed. Salvation, for the Jew, was to be had by keeping the law. They kept the law. It was about the law. It had to be earned. It was up to the individual and keeping the law, so they thought. If a person was good enough, he would be rewarded; if he was bad enough, he would be punished. Misunderstanding of the law, misunderstanding, right? Yet, it was the common belief. Now into that climate Jesus introduced grace and mercy. He said, 'Salvation has nothing to do with the goodness of your efforts or how hard you try. It has to do with me. You must believe.' It blew their minds. What? What? Salvation not about what I do or don't do? And it's all about You? Ah, that's too hard. This is radical. Foreign to their thinking. Who does this guy think He is?

Thirdly, Jesus claims not only deity, not only preexistence, not only the source of eternal life, but He claims they can't believe on their own. They are unable to believe. They do not have the ability to believe in Him unless the Father grants them that belief. 'Why, we're God's people! What do you mean that we can't believe? We are the chosen ones! What are you saying, Jesus, that we can't believe?' To think that God would choose some and not others, man, that was appalling. It was repugnant to them. Verse 44, Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." Do you hear it? You can't come to me unless the Father draws you to me. Now, friends, you and I both know that nothing raises the ire of the human heart than to tell me that I can't do something on my own power.

One of the things that, probably the favorite phrase growing up, April can tell you, is "I can do it myself!" You ever hear that? I can do it myself! That is the inclination of the human heart. It's all about me. And now you're telling me that I can't on my own power come to God and be rescued? That I'm not the sole authority in my heart? That I'm not the master of my fate? And Jesus says, 'No. You're not.' You can't come unless the Father draws you.' Frankly guys, election elicits the same response now, it's hard! It's hard. We want to push back against that, but then to fully round out the rejection, Jesus said, it was going to be up to Himself if they were resurrected on that last day. Look at that last part of verse 44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." 'Yep, that's me. I have the authority. I have the authority to raise you from the dead at the end of time, the resurrection, resurrection day, only me. That's me. That's my authority,' Jesus says. Blew them away. Can you kind of see why it would blow them away? I mean, I can. To have somebody come teach that kind of stuff, you'd be blown away even if you didn't know better. If I came in this room and said these things, you'd say this guy needs a placard to go stand on the street corner. This guy has lost it. Certainly not who you'd want to be your king. So, they rejected Him.

Now how did Jesus respond to that rejection? I can tell you, if I was the pastor of a 15,000-member church one day, and the next day I was a pastor to twelve, I would be doing a little soul searching. My confidence would be a little bit shattered. I might doubt my ability somewhat. I'd be rehashing everything that I said. What did I say? But you don't see any of that in Jesus. He just took it all in stride. I don't see any guilt or any surprise or anything in Jesus' response. Now, the disciples' confidence was shaken. 'We thought now was the time, and now you're saying it's twelve again.' Why? Why was Jesus not surprised?

First of all, He knew that the Spirit gives life. He knew that the Spirit gives life. He knew that without the Spirit's work to open their eyes they were not going to see. Verse 63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all." That is a strong statement. It is the Spirit who

gives life. The flesh helps a little bit. Helps some. No, that's not what it says. "The flesh helps not at all." He says, you're having trouble swallowing my deity, you're having trouble thinking that I have the keys to eternal life. You struggle with all this? He says, you would not even believe in me if you saw me ascending into heaven back to my Father again. The gist of His argument is that 'I have shown you time and time and time again who I am. My works show you who I am, and yet you wouldn't believe me. If you're not going to believe these, you're not going to believe even if you saw me rising into heaven again. You're just not going to,' He says. Because they are spiritually discerned, you will not understand. Only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit taking the blinders off of our eyes and changing our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, we're not going to understand. We're just not going to. Left to ourselves, no one believes. It's the Holy Spirit's work in our heart and in our mind.

The example that He gives is Judas. Man, he is a poster child for this. I'm just telling you. Think about it. Judas had been with Jesus His whole ministry. Think what Judas had seen. He had seen all the healings. He had seen all the miracles. He had been in on all the private conversations that Jesus had had. Jesus explained the parables to him! You know, John writes that the whole world could not contain the books if he had written everything that Jesus had said and done. Judas was there. He saw it all. He had watched him heal the sick, cause the lame to walk and the blind to see. If it were possible for a man to believe without the drawing of the Holy Spirit, I present to you, Judas would have believed. How could he not believe? There's no other way to explain the hardness of Judas' heart. Because he was there! He is a prime example that flesh and blood cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

Jesus was unaffected by the mass exodus because He knew the Spirit would draw those He would, and they would come to Him. He would draw those, as we spoke about earlier, who had been His chosen people from before the foundation of the world who the Father had chosen, who the Son would purchase, and who the Spirit would draw to Himself in that eternal covenant, that love relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that those whom the Father had given to Him would come. Verse 65, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." He knew who would come, He was omniscient. He's God. He knows. He knew who would believe and who wouldn't, so He wasn't surprised for a moment. Again, Judas' example, this is an incredible testimony to the Spirit of Christ and who Jesus was. Jesus handpicked Judas knowing that he would be the one who would betray Him. That's the difference between me and Jesus. I'm sorry, you're going to betray me? I'm probably not going to pick you to be a part of my inner circle. And yet, that's what Jesus did to accomplish what He would accomplish.

Look at 64: "But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)" He knew from the beginning. Verses 70 and 71: "Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him." What it must have been like for Jesus in all those conversations, to have a conversation like you and I have conversation, with Judas, knowing that he was the one who was going to sell him down the river, who would cause his death. And yet, Jesus loved him. He cared about him. He brought him on to the twelve. Jesus was unaffected by the rejection because He foresaw it. He knew who would believe, who wouldn't believe, and His plan was not affected at all.

So, what are the implications, Steve? What are the things that we can draw from that? Let me suggest two. The first implication that I draw from this text is that there is one Holy Spirit,

and I'm not Him. There's one Holy Spirit and I am not Him. Only the Holy Spirit can change a heart. I can't. 2 Corinthians 4:3, Paul writes: "And if even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the glory of God." The Bible teaches that each of us is born blind to spiritual things. We can't comprehend them. We don't understand them. It's a different language. We can't see. But it's the Holy Spirit's role to take the blinders off our eyes so that we can see, so that we can understand. But it's the Holy Spirit's role, not mine. It's not my role; it's way beyond my ability to change a heart or a mind. And you know what? I'm okay with that! You see, in the salvation of men and women and children, there is a mystery, a mystery that I will never understand until that day. Even those of us who have made theology and salvation and all these things so much a part of our lives, I'm telling you, probably we don't have it all right. We don't understand it, because it's a mystery. And I'm really okay with that because you see, I work with less brain cells than what God does. I have finite understanding. I only understand a little bit. God understands it all. There is mystery here. Don't think that you've got it all figured out because you don't. And so, we just stand back in wonder and mystery and say, "This is amazing." And we continue to think and to learn and to understand. Look, if there is no mystery in salvation for you, your God is not the God of the universe. He's just a bigger version of yourself, an exalted version of yourself, and you're really kind of thinking of yourself too highly. There's mystery here because you're not going to understand it all. The infinite ways of God will always be beyond us. So therefore, I am so glad that it's the Holy Spirit's role to change my heart and mind, because I can trust Him. I couldn't trust myself. And I certainly can't trust myself to change anybody else's heart and mind. I am so glad that it's His role and not mine. I can confidently stand before you each week and say, "God will change your heart if you ask Him to." And leave it at that. Because I really don't know how it all works. How does the Holy Spirit change your mind and your heart and change your spirit and how does a man become brand new, a new creature? Don't know! But I know it's true. It's just not my role. So, I can speak confidently of the beauties of Jesus and let Him fulfill His role for His people.

So, what are the implications, again? I can tell you what it means for my family, raising children, now working with grandchildren. For Christian parents, you see, it's easy for us to kind of get anxious about our children's salvation. Y'all know, right, how it's easy to be anxious? And how easy it is for me to put on the mantle of the Holy Spirit in their life, and if you don't have children, think about those friends that you really care about and really want them to see Jesus. But how often do we think that if I just do everything right, they'll come to Jesus. If I dress them right and if I keep them from the bad influences that are in the world, then they'll come to know Jesus. And if I dress them in a certain way and if I have the right education platform for them, if I put them in the right environment and if I teach them enough and if I discipline them just right, then I know God's going to save them. Now, don't hear me say, 'Don't do all those things,' right? They're important. But they're not life changing and heart changing. We need to remind ourselves that all those things we do, do not ensure the salvation of our children.

Remember Judas? Who could have had more benefits than Judas? Understand, this is not a downer for me, this is life-giving for me because my children's salvation is not up to me and my efforts. Their soul and their eternal destiny is solely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, absolutely dependent on Him. He can do what I cannot do, because I cannot change my child's heart. I can change their behavior, but I can't change their heart.

So where does this leave us? Do I throw up my hands and say “Que Sera Sera, whatever will be, will be! It’s alright. It’s enough. You know, whatever.” Of course not! They’re your children! Your good friends! Maybe your parents! So, what do you do? What it does is it makes me recognize my utter helplessness, that this far outstrips my ability, so it drives me to my knees. I am helpless in this, but I have something to do, I fall to my knees and I pray for them. It drives me there and I pray and I pray and I pray because I’m helpless to change their heart, and I ask the one that can change their heart to change their heart. Do you see? It changes that orientation of anxiety and what if, what if, to wholly trusting in Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit to change them.

Now, I still teach. And I still train, and I still read them Bible stories and I still discipline them, and I still dress them in a certain way that is appropriate, and I protect them from the friends that may harm them. But I do so, knowing that these are just perhaps the means the Holy Spirit uses to bring them to Himself. It’s life-giving. Look, nothing like understanding my helplessness drives me to pray. Why would I even pray if I could do it myself? Why would I ask somebody else? Guys, we’re independent enough, right? We know that if I can do it myself, I will. I won’t ask for help. Nothing drives you to your knees like knowing that you can’t do it. But you know the one who can. So that’s the implication that I see here.

There are a lot more implications. What about the fact that no one will come to Jesus because of my slick presentation of the gospel? I can say all the right words and have all the right phrases and keep the margins right, I can do all those things and it won’t make one whit of difference. Because it takes Jesus’ Spirit to change a man’s heart. I don’t know about you, but I find so much anxiety lifted when I know it’s not up to me. It’s when the Holy Spirit opens a man’s understanding and the truth of Jesus’ words pierce his heart. There’s one Holy Spirit and I’m not Him.

Secondly, when all seems lost, all is not lost. I come back again to the fact that Jesus was unaffected by the mass exodus of these people. He didn’t blink an eye when He saw everyone leaving. He didn’t fret. He wasn’t anxious. He didn’t question Himself or His mission. He knew what they would do long before this. He knew the story; He knows the end of the story in that, He wins. He knew that the cause of His kingdom would not be affected at all. He had a plan, and He was working His plan. His plan was always to use the twelve to change the world. To the disciples it felt like a complete and total failure, but from that little start, twelve men would change the world. I looked it up, did you know that there’s more than 2 billion believers in the world right now as we speak? 2 billion. Let me ask you, was Jesus’ plan a success or not? Was His plan thwarted by the 14,988 that left? Not at all.

So what does that mean to me? Well, it comforts me because I know something of what it means to fail. I have a year or two on most of you and that’s just more opportunity to fail. And I don’t like it, I’ll go on record. I don’t like to fail. I’m not exempt from that feeling that all is lost. Life will never be the same again. I’ve been there more times than I care to count. But I have to remind myself of Jesus’ perspective. I have to remind myself from God’s perspective, those were not failures at all, just stepping stones to what He had next for me. It’s just a part of the plan. Not one of my failures caught Him off guard. Not one. Not one of my failures is without purpose and meaning. Not one. He was just lining things up for the next chapter. Now in the middle of that, I don’t see it very well, I’ll be honest. It felt a lot like failure to me, but not from Jesus’ perspective. Time after time after looking back at these failures I can see God’s hand leading me and guiding me into that next chapter. Time doesn’t allow me to share some of those, but sometime get me alone and I’ll share some of these with you. It was God’s way of getting me to

the next chapter. Now, He doesn't always show us that. I think the quickest one was like three months after a failure He showed me what He was doing. Most of the time it's not that way. Sometimes it's years. Maybe decades. Sometimes you'll never see because it's generational. But we can trust Him that He's working His plan. God's timing is never mine. Ever. That's okay, because He knows more than I do. What seems like a failure to us is simply the next step. I don't know what you're facing this morning. I don't know what kind of colossal failure you might be owning. I hurt for you. I'm sorry. I wish I could take it away, but I can't; I'm not the Holy Spirit. In the midst of your struggle and pain, may I suggest to you, take heart that Jesus is at work. You don't have to feel it. You don't have to see it. Just know that it's true. Even when you don't understand, Jesus' hands are all over it.

So, to close our time together I want to return to our story. The crowds are gone; Jesus looks at His disciples and He says, "Do you want to go away as well?" and Peter says, "No. You have the words of eternal life. Where are we going to go?" Notice the difference between those who know Jesus and those who don't, the difference between the crowd and the disciples. The crowd saw all the works of Jesus and *that* drew them in, but when Jesus started speaking it drove them away. The disciples saw the works, but what was it that drew them to Him? What does he say? "You have the words of eternal life." It was the *words* that brought him to Him; it was the understanding that He was the Messiah. You may be here this morning and not be a believer. All of this is kind of different to you. I'm glad you're here! I can only imagine you might be a little lost, because we assume a lot. What you need to know today is that Jesus alone holds the key to your eternal life, period. It's what you do with Jesus that matters and He says, "Come to me." To come to Jesus means that you believe He is God, He was sent from the Father to pay the penalty of your sin, and He came to save. He will change your heart. He says, "Trust Me." Something I say often that seems to encapsulate this is, give all that you are, to all that you know of Him, and He will not turn you away. You can trust Him.

Now if you're a believer and going through difficult days, this is for you as well. I know it doesn't make sense in the midst of your trials. When you don't understand, believe and trust. He has a plan. Let's pray.

Father, we are helpless to bring about the change in our hearts that we need. So, we run as little children to you. Will you meet us in our lack of understanding? Will you take our hearts and all this mystery of what it means to be a Christian, and help us to believe? We trust You. Work among your people. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now is the time when we are able to celebrate Communion together, the Lord's Table. It is one of the sacraments that Jesus left for us to remind us once again of the broken body and the shed blood. In verse 51 of our text, Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." We are reminded from this text that it is only Jesus who gives life and it is only Jesus' broken body and shed blood that provides life for us. So, as you participate today, let the distractions go away and think about the broken body and the shed blood that gives life.

It is said that on the night that He was betrayed Jesus took the bread and after having blessed it He broke it, and He said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way He took the cup after supper and He said, "This is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." We celebrate the Lord's Table, first of all, because He told us to. But we desperately need to be reminded of what the cross has done for us, what Jesus on the cross has done for us. Therefore,

when we celebrate the Lord's Table it's for those of us who trust in the name of Jesus for our salvation. If you're here this morning and all of this is kind of new and you've never put all your faith and trust in Jesus to save you from your sins, I would ask that you just take this time to contemplate, not take the elements, just contemplate and ask Jesus, "Will you make yourself real to me?"