

Food Rejected
John 6:52-71
Sermon Outline

Introduction: There is a great irony that we face every Advent: We declare that God has come in Christ to fix all that is wrong with the world and the world is indifferent. John faced the same irony writing at the end of the 1st Century A.D. We will consider three questions: (i) Why do so many defect from (or reject) Jesus? (ii) Why should we not defect? (iii) How do we keep from defecting?

I) Why do so many defect from (or reject) Jesus?

A) A secondary reason: Jesus people represent him poorly

B) The fundamental reason: Jesus offends our pride

vv. 60-61: ...Do you take offense at this?

1) The offensive heart of the passage: *vs. 53: Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you.*

a) Jesus is describing himself as essential food.

Like manna (*Exodus 16:3*)

b) One step beyond manna: Without me you are already dead

Like Ezekiel's dry bones

...and behold there were many on the surface of the valley, and, behold, they were very dry...Son of man, can these bones live?

Jesus' word to us: "I am your King, but, without me inside, you are only bones scattered in the wilderness."

C) Jesus' offensive challenge to us.

Not an "add on". Not a spiritual "option"

We resist this:

It's worse than we think: We are "alive" to virtually everything but God

Who wants to hear this?

II) Why should we not defect from or ignore Jesus?

Because he give us what we really need, and he gives us what we most deeply want

Vs. 55 ...true food...and true drink

A) Food that never fails us

Manna, like every other good gift of God, peters out

But Jesus gives us himself (not just his ideas—but himself): the joy and fullness of God's indestructible life in us

We can only guess at the meaning of this fullness

B) Drink that cleanses

1) Something new and disturbing in *vs. 53: unless you drink the blood...*

2) Why disturbing?

a) Drinking blood was strictly forbidden (*Lev 17:10—You shall not eat the blood of any flesh... Whoever eats it shall be cut off*)

b) To be feasted upon was to be under the curse of God

Deut. 28:26 ...your dead body shall be food for all the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.

Ezek. 39:17ff ...Assemble and come for the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you...you shall eat flesh and drink blood...

3) Why does Jesus conjure up such frightful language and apply it to himself?

Because he wanted us to understand how eternal life comes to us: his gift through substitution

As the beasts of field and air drew their life from the terrible sacrifice described by Ezekiel, so we now draw life from the terrible sacrifice of the Son of Man.

Nothing pleasant about the cross: By it God shows us how deep our crimes run and how far he was prepared to go to redeem us from them.

Summary: We clamor for what we want. Jesus gives us at the Lord's Table what we need. Don't miss this

III) How do we keep from defecting?

By habitually returning to Christ and his cross.

A) When Jesus tells us to *eat and drink* he is appealing to something habitual

Many stopped *walking with Jesus (vs. 66)*. But Peter and the 12 continue "to walk"

There is no gimmick for not defecting—only a habit of the heart.

B) We don't have to be a gourmand to feed on Jesus.

Peter barely knew what he was saying in *vs. 68 (To whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life)*

We are the same.

But that was OK: What matters pre-eminently is not how much faith we have; it is rather that the eyes of our faith are pointed in the right direction.

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Reflect upon the irony of Advent: Jesus is proclaimed as the deep answer to all our problems, and so few people either "get it" or care. Why such systemic ignoring of Jesus if he really is God's Messiah?
- 2) What does Jesus mean when he says, "You have no life within you?" What sort of life is he talking about? Is it true of your friend who does not "feed" on Jesus that he is completely without this life?
- 3) Discuss/reflect upon the following statement: "We say, 'If I could just get a little healthier, or just lose a little weight, or just get a better job, or just marry that person, or just divorce that person, or just boost my GPA---If I could just get Jesus to tweak these things for me, then I would be happy, things would be great, and I could carry on without a lot of extra help from him.' And Jesus responds, 'I am not in the tweaking business! I am not an "add on", I am not a "spiritual option" for your otherwise OK life. I am here because you are dead. You may be alive to many things—but, as far as loving God and seeking his glory goes, you are bleached bones scattered in the wilderness.'"
- 4) Jesus offers eternal life. What is it? Do you want it? What, if anything, makes the whole idea unappealing to you?
- 5) Reflect on the following statement of C.S. Lewis (From "The Weight of Glory"): "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink, sex, and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who

wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

- 6) Reflect upon the following statement: “There is nothing pleasant about the cross (any more than there is anything pleasant about birds and beasts picking a man’s body clean). The cross was unspeakably terrible—bloody, cruel, terrifying. We want something more pleasant. But God insists upon the cross, where Jesus flesh was lacerated and his blood was shed. God insists upon it so that we can see how deep our crimes run and how far he was prepared to go to deliver us from them.”
- 7) When Jesus tells us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, he is appealing to something habitual—eating. His point is that we must keep coming back to him, day by day, week by week, year by year. What gets in the way of such a habitual return in your life? What will you do to change?
- 8) When Peter said, “You have the words of eternal life,” to Jesus, he barely understood what he was saying. But Jesus loved and received him anyway, because what matters most to Jesus is that our faith is in him: faith and understanding need to grow, but what matters the most is that we are trusting the right Person. What encouragement do you draw from this?