The Gospel of John: To Whom Shall We Go
John 6:60-71

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.

My message today is entitled, To Whom Shall We Go, and it is MEATY. I hope you came hungry, because you will go away full this morning with a doggy bag in tow! Are you ready? OK, my message will fall under five subheadings: 1) The Offensive Claims of Jesus; 2) The Words of Spirit and Life; 3) The Great Pruning; 4) The Judas Tension; and 5) To Whom Shall We Turn?

I. The Offensive Claims of Jesus

   For those of you who may be joining us for the first time today, you need to know that we are slowly making our way through the Gospel of John. We have recently been to the mountain near Bethsaida where Jesus fed the 5000 in the early part of John 6. The past two Sundays we have heard Jesus deliver His “I am the Bread of Life” message that took place the next day in Capernaum, and this morning we are going to hear the reaction of His listeners—and specifically, the reaction of a group people John refers to as “many of his disciples.” Let me comment on this term, “disciples,” for just minute to avoid confusion.

Remember that in the ancient world, those who followed a teacher around were called “disciples.” John the Baptist had disciples; Plato had disciples; lots of famous teachers had disciples in the ancient world. Now, disciples generally fell into two groups of people: 1) the general followers, and 2) the chosen apprentices. Most “disciples” of any given teacher were in the first category of general followers: these were people who chose to follow a teacher because they found him interesting and wanted to learn what they could from him. In the four gospel accounts, this general group of “disciples” ranged anywhere from 70 people to thousands of people, depending on the day. The other classification of disciples were those individuals recruited by the Teacher as apprentices through a personal invitation. When we read the
Gospels, the few individuals recruited by Jesus to be His apprentices are regularly referred to as the Twelve. We will hear from both the general disciples and the Twelve this morning. First, we will hear from the general group of followers simply known as “his disciples” as we pick up the story in vs. 60: “When many of his disciples heard it, they said to themselves, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this?’

Have you ever offended a large group of people? I suspect we all know what it’s like to offend one or two people at a time, but for those of us who work in the world of public speaking, we unfortunately know what it’s like to offend large numbers of people at one time. In 30 years of ministry, I have offended thousands of people! A few years ago, during an election year, I made some observations about a certain presidential candidate, and you could literally feel the air go out of the room. I could see the offense boiling in the eyes of many people; I could see it in their body language; and for weeks afterward I received numerous emails scolding me regarding what I said. Some people left the church and never returned. It’s no fun to be the source of offense, but that’s where Jesus is right now.

John reports that Jesus’ listeners were offended because of His “hard sayings;” so what were the “hard sayings” that the disciples found difficult to accept? What part of our Lord’s teaching offended the large group of general disciples? Well, when we think of everything that Jesus said in His “I am the Bread of Life” message that we heard last week, the list of potentially offensive points is numerous! Let’s consider just a few:

1) Jesus said that the “bread that endures to eternal life” was available only through Him, because the Father had set His seal on Jesus. That may have struck a few people as arrogant.

2) Jesus said that the “work of God” was not abiding by the law of Moses, but believing in Him. That may have offended many who had a very high opinion of Moses and the law.

3) Jesus referred to Himself as “the true bread of God who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” as opposed to the manna sent from heaven to their fathers who ate it and died. Perhaps some perceived Jesus to be disrespecting the patriarchs.

4) Jesus invoked the famous words, “I AM” and added to His claim, “I AM the Bread of Life.” This sounds a lot like blasphemy…unless, of course, Jesus is God…but that would be difficult to believe of a man who grew up just down the road in Nazareth.

5) Jesus said that whoever comes to Him shall never hunger or thirst. That sounds interesting, but the disciples don’t know whether that means literal food and drink or something metaphorical.
6) Jesus said that whoever looks on Him and believes Him will have eternal life. Again…it seems to be all about Jesus…as though He is the center of the universe and the most important person in the room.

7) Jesus said that no one could come to Him unless the Father first drew that person to Jesus. What about free will, reason, human intelligence…?

8) Jesus said that “the bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” It just got weird…are you saying we are to eat your flesh?

9) No doubt the most offensive thing Jesus said, as well as the most recent thing that He said was this: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” O.K.…now you’ve gone too far, and eewww…what?

We must do our best to relate with these offended disciples. Like many throughout history, these people had a very good, first impression of Jesus. They saw His compassion when He healed the sick; they saw His power when He miraculously fed the masses with only a few fish and loaves; and Jesus taught them many things that glorious night in Bethsaida; things that led them all to conclude in vs. 14 “This indeed is the prophet who was to come into the world!”

Jesus was so impressive that the large crowd was ready to crown Jesus as their Rebel King as we read in vs. 15. Thousands of these new “disciples” were determined to follow Jesus…this One who could feed their bellies, heal their infirmaries, and lead them to victory over their enemies.

But now, having heard Jesus’ sermon in the Capernaum synagogue, these once-enthusiastic “disciples” of Jesus are feeling disillusioned and disappointed. No doubt many were grumbling to each other, “Is he going to make some more bread or not? What does He have against Moses, anyways? If anyone who ‘believes gains eternal life,’ doesn’t that mean those disgusting Gentiles could be saved as well? That can’t be right. What in the world does ‘eating his flesh and drinking his blood’ have to do with anything? We don’t want a dead leader; we want a prophet-king who can lead us in a revolution! Why is He is making Himself out to be more important than Moses…as though He is the only way to God and the life eternal! Who does this guy think He is?”

Church, remember that these disciples do not have the benefit of the cross and the empty tomb. They don’t have the Holy Spirit yet. Though disappointed in their grumbling, Jesus knows that His teaching will make more sense when He has risen from the grave and defeated death. Such is likely why Jesus responds in vss. 61-62, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”

It seems to me that Jesus is asking this crowd to hang in there till the end…to keep walking with Him until they witness the resurrection and the ascension that will ratify all that Jesus has said
about Himself. Apart from the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus, much of what He is saying will remain a mystery.

In addition to lacking context and the Holy Spirit, Jesus also knows that the vast majority of these “disciples” are offended because they are following Him with flesh-driven expectations. They are thinking only of today. Their priorities are food, money, and political liberation. As such, it is no wonder they do not understand what He has been saying. And that leads us to my second subheading:

II. The Words of Spirit and Life
Jesus addresses the disciples’ preoccupation with the flesh in vs. 63, saying, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.” Do you hear what Jesus is saying? The grumblers want a fleshly, earthy message that ministers to their needs of the flesh; but Jesus will lay down His flesh and blood so that they might receive the Spirit who gives life. This is always the tension in the church. We want answers and comfort in our lives now…but Jesus has come to save our souls.

Church…your flesh matters…it is how we experience and engage the world, and we all have needs in the flesh. How people treat people matters; our families matter; our jobs matter. But you know this is true: things of the flesh cannot save you. All the food, money, liberation, and success the world offers won’t save you from the fate that awaits the unredeemed soul. I understand that you may not care about that right now. Perhaps you are young, healthy, and just looking for a good time. Perhaps you feel like the needs of your flesh are so pressing that you don’t have any margin to worry about your spirit.

If this is your mindset, the words of Jesus will likely fall on the deaf ears of your flesh-centered existence. You will come to Him in hopes of getting what you want for today and walk away disappointed and disillusioned. Those consumed with their flesh are offended by the teachings of Jesus. But know this you unbelieving Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve: you are souls…you are so much more than just a fleshly machine. Your soul is personal, moral, and immortal…and your soul will go on. When your earthly life expires, you will stand before your Creator. At that time you will give an account for your life. And then you will be judged…not only for the actions of your flesh, but for the very attitudes of your heart; your ambitions; your thought life; and your secrets. The standard of your judgment will not be your standard for yourself; it will be God’s holy standard as written upon your moral heart and the moral law that He has given us in His Word. And here is the truth, dear soul: you will not be found innocent. You will be found guilty of high treason against your Creator, and there will be justice. No amount of effort…no amount of success…no amount of fun…no amount of good food or good deeds will alter the outcome of God’s judgment upon your sinful soul. God has not sinned…we have. And the penalty of sin is death…a death that does not end. There is only One who can save us; One who can stand between God’s justice and our punishment. He is the Lamb of God who came to die in our place as the once and for all sacrifice; and it is He, exactly this glorious One, in whom you now find offense. Please allow Him to offend you; for He has not come to fill your belly or your
bank account; He has come to rescue your soul from the judgment you deserve…the judgment we all deserve.

Jesus came to die as the Lamb of God; sacrificed on the cross as the One and Final sacrifice to atone for our sin. This is why we must feast upon his sacrificed flesh and blood; for He has come to save the immortal part of every person who will believe and look upon Him. Such is why, for those longing for the redemption of our sin-sick souls; Jesus is Savior and Lord. But for those looking only for a revolution; or a free meal; or a cultural icon; or their personal genie in a bottle; …get ready for disappointment. Get ready to be offended. This One will not tell you what you want to hear; He will tell you the truth! He will not give you everything you want…but He will absolutely provide exactly what you need…His Spirit…and eternal life!

Now…does that mean that Jesus doesn’t care about your fleshly needs, or our cultural woes, or our cry for justice? Not at all. As Jesus says in Matthew 6, “Your Father knows that you need these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.” Jesus is trying to usher people into the Kingdom of God…then the needs of the flesh will be addressed. Unfortunately, these disciples in Capernaum are obsessed with making Jesus the King of their earthly revolution; they want the bread that He can provide; and they fail to understand the urgency of their spiritual condition.

Listen to how Jesus concludes His comments to the disillusioned, offended disciples: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who don’t believe.” And John adds a comment, (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

The words of Jesus are spirit and life. Spirit and life are available for those who believe His words…

Church, in the end…truth is more precious than bread. Truth…the truth of our Lord’s words…brings spirit and life to our perishing souls. To feed on Jesus is to feed on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord! This hungry crowd came seeking bread for their bellies, but Jesus has been distributing that which satisfies the soul! This is the testimony of believers through the ages: His words nourish the soul with living bread and living water! But for those who do not believe…for those who follow after Jesus only for how it might benefit their fleshly existence…these are the “disciples” who walk away disillusioned, disappointed and offended.

Jesus explains why it so; that some would believe and others not. For the third time now Jesus says in vs. 65, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

We touched on this theme already, and I know some of you are concerned by this notion that only those who are drawn by the Father can come to Jesus. But let me ask you a question: how many of you know that the natural disposition of a sinful human being is to think only of the
flesh? Do you know people who have a remarkable unawareness and disregard for spiritual matters? I do…I’m sure you do as well. I sometimes find myself jealous of the man who is totally at home in the world…the one who has such singular focus on the things of the flesh that he thinks nothing of the life to come. I wonder what it would be like to be so unencumbered with concerns about eternity…to have no fear of the Lord or any care for souls who are perishing when these very things weigh heavily upon my thoughts day and night and even in my dreams.

But let us ask the question: would anyone look to eternity save the grace and election of our sovereign God? Would any of us ever look to the heavens if not first beckoned by our Creator? It is only grace that awakens the spirit. It is only the love of the Father that stirs within the heart of a rebellious son—leading him to repent and return Home. Apart from the remarkable grace of God, it would never even occur to us to care about anything more than our next meal.

Let me ask you a question this morning: Does eternity weigh heavily upon your soul? Do you fear the Lord? Is your conscience a relentless taskmaster, calling you night and day to repent and to be reconciled to God? Be grateful friend…for only those drawn by the Father care for such things. Thank God that you may look to the Lamb…He is the sustenance your hungry soul longs for, and there is no other. Let us now turn to my third subheading…

III. The Great Pruning

John records here in John 6:66: After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

The picture John describes is heartbreaking. Imagine the synagogue in Capernaum—there is standing room only; thousands are straining to get catch a glimpse the Jesus, the Prophet like Moses who fed them in Bethsaida. Everyone had been hanging on his every word. But now, having heard what He said, the offense is palpable. You can cut the silence with a knife. No doubt some of the mothers gather their children and turn away, offended that Jesus spoke of drinking blood in front of the little ones. The zealous patriots in search of a prophetic military general roll their eyes and shake their heads in disgust. The miracle seekers hoping for more bread wander off to find lunch by some other means; and the Bible students leave Jesus in search of a new Rabbi who will teach “appropriate theology.”

No doubt, Jesus has seen this reaction from crowds in other towns; but this time those who are grumbling are disciples…many whom He has come to know…and they too, are walking away. A movement that felt like it was about to explode; a following that would have made any mega-church pastor proud…and it’s dwindled down to just a few in a matter of minutes. As the disillusioned disciples walk away, they no doubt echo the lament of the travelers on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, “But we had hoped He was the one to redeem Israel…”

Church, the hard teachings of Jesus are sharper than a two-edged sword. The teachings of Jesus serve as the pruner’s knife in the hand of the Father as He cuts away the dead wood of unbelief and wrong belief.
Here’s what we all know: crowds generally gather to hear what they want to hear; and if you offend them…if your preaching does not affirm and comfort their flesh, they move on to find a teaching that will “scratch their itch.” Many of you know that I preached through the entire Gospel of Luke from 2010-2015…152 messages directly from the teachings of Jesus. Do you know how much our church grew during that 4.5 years? Nada. Now, many were drawn to the teaching of the Gospel, but just as many or more were offended by the hard sayings of Jesus and walked away. I remember a letter I received midway through the series from a prominent couple in our church who stated very clearly that they were leaving to attend a church that would make them feel good about themselves instead of always calling them to repent. I get it. Preaching the teachings of Jesus is hard; and hearing the teachings of Jesus is hard. Why? Because our “flesh” doesn’t care for the “knife,” right?

But remember this, church: Jesus came to perform spiritual surgery on those who are terminally ill due to the cancer of sin. Jesus did not come for palliative care. Jesus did not come to make us comfortable in our dying; He came to cut out the cancer and defeat death once and for all. So yes, some of His words can hurt our feelings or cause us to question the most basic assumptions that we operate on. His words will force us to evaluate our behavior and attitudes in light of God’s perfect standard. His words will shine light upon those things we would rather keep hidden. And here’s what we learn from our text: many people, even those who thought themselves to be “disciples of Jesus,” will be so offended that they will leave…in large numbers.

Now, let’s remember that these same teachings of Jesus have also led to exponential growth of God’s Kingdom on earth over the past 2000 years! It turns out that the Pruner’s knife is absolutely essential for Kingdom growth and creating disciples who will bear fruit. This is exactly the picture Jesus will teach us about in John 15 when He states, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

The great pruning happens wherever the hard teachings of Jesus are taught, and it must. Why? First, it does us no good to follow a “Jesus” of our own making…our own “bedazzled Jesus” won’t save us. Secondly, it does not serve God’s Kingdom agenda for large crowds of people to call themselves Christians, construct huge buildings, and then teach and behave in ways that directly contradict what Jesus said. Those kinds of churches misrepresent the Kingdom of God and lead people to some form of religiously sanctioned idolatry. Finally, “disciples” who follow Jesus only for what Jesus can do for them, with no willingness to surrender, obey, or live sacrificially, are those who bear no fruit. They have failed to grasp the hard teaching of Jesus: that to follow Him is to deny oneself, take up one’s cross, and to go where He leads us. That’s what Jesus said in Luke 9:23; turns out He meant it. And that means that as His followers, we have to hang on and trust Him, even when we are offended or unsure or enduring hardships. Jesus is looking for those kinds of disciples…the kind that will endure to the end; and He is willing to apply the Pruner’s knife to produce those who will bear fruit. Let us now quickly touch on my fourth subheading…
IV. The Judas Tension

After many disciples abandon Jesus, He looks to the Twelve and asks in vs. 67, “Do you want to go away as well?” This is the moment of truth. All could be lost at this moment should the chosen Twelve cast a vote of no-confidence in their leader.

Peter, at this defining moment, replies, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

I love this response, and I’m going to finish up with some thoughts on what Peter just said in a minute; but let us quickly consider how Jesus responds.

John records Jesus’ response in vs. 70-71, “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.

Now…why did Jesus say this to Peter and the Twelve? Well, as we’ve read a few times now in John 6, we can’t come to Jesus without the Father first drawing us, right? As Jesus says later regarding Peter’s confession of Jesus in Caesarea Philippi, “…flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” This is consistently the message Jesus has preached; that only those drawn by the Father can come to Jesus…and Jesus says in Luke 10:22, “No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

But now we have a problem, don’t we…a problem Jesus states Himself. Judas Iscariot was chosen by Jesus as one of the Twelve; and yet, John tells us, he is a devil…he is the one who will betray Jesus. So…here’s the problem: if Jesus chose Judas, how is it that Judas could ever betray Jesus? It actually sounds like Jesus is asking that question, “Did I not choose the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” If those chosen by Jesus can never fall away—which is essentially how we understand the reformed doctrine of election--how then do we account for Judas’ betrayal? There are millions of pages written about this subject, and I won’t be able to unpack all the different ways people address this problem for you this morning. We will deal with the doctrinal debate about Judas on another day. For now, instead of trying to defend any particular doctrine, I want you to live in the “Judas tension” that we find in the text.

And here’s the tension: on the one hand we know that no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him…Jesus has said that on three occasions. On the other hand, we find here an occasion where one who was personally chosen by Jesus betrays Jesus, not to mention hundreds, if not thousands of “disciples” who just walk away from Jesus in Capernaum when offended. These stories create tension when it comes to God’s sovereign call and human free will; and it is not an unusual tension…it is a tension found throughout the text, and throughout human history. So, what are we to make of this “Judas tension?”
First of all, let us remember that God doesn’t draw puppets to Jesus; He draws people. Jesus doesn’t choose puppets to be His disciples; Jesus chooses people. All people, all human beings, are capable of goodness and treachery; we all come with potential for greatness and potential for evil…that is the very story of creation and sadly, the story of the fall. When we see one of the chosen Twelve turn and betray Jesus, when we see hundreds of “disciples” in Capernaum fall away and turn from Jesus, it should cause us all to pause. It should cause us to exercise constant vigilance regarding our faith. As Paul writes in Ephesians 5: “Look carefully how you walk…for the days are evil.” The “Judas tension” affects me deeply as a pastor, and here’s why: we all know examples of “Judas pastors,” don’t we?

We are all familiar with pastors who were clearly called by God to serve as a disciple of Jesus and an under-shepherd of His sheep—many who functioned at a high level for many years. They preached the gospel and led thousands to Christ. God accomplished many glorious things for His Kingdom and His glory through these leaders. However, over time, these “Judas pastors” turned. They became teachers of heresies; or, even worse, they became apostates who directly contradicted the claims of scripture. Any time we witness a “Judas” story, it should cause us to shudder and to take an inventory of our own lives. No high office, not even the calling to serve as one of the Twelve original disciples, makes a human being immune from temptation and disillusionment. The “Judas tension” forces us all to take nothing for granted, no matter how long we have served in the ministry or called ourselves “disciples.” Search the scriptures and for every passage in the scripture that affirms our election, there are others that warn us to be careful how we walk and to be vigilant about our faith. There is tension there, and that is as it should be.

Now…did the betrayal of Judas finally serve God’s ultimate purpose for His plan of redemption? Yes. Did Judas have to betray Jesus? No. Did God know Judas would betray Jesus? Yes. Did God predetermine Judas to betray Jesus? No. Can you feel the tension that exists between God’s sovereign providence and human accountability…it is a tension commonly found in the text, and it is a tension we will never fully resolve. Does the “Judas tension” offend you? OK, be offended…but “do you want to go away as well?” That is the question Jesus asked the Twelve, so let us return to Peter’s answer in my fifth and final subheading:

V. To Whom Shall We Turn?

Church, I love the way Peter responded to Jesus when asked, “Do you want to go away as well?” Peter responds, “To whom shall we turn? You have the words of eternal life…” I want to share a few thoughts on that concept in closing.

If you follow Jesus long enough; if you actually spend time reading what He said; if you actually attempt to follow Him; if you get involved in a local church for any length of time, here’s what I can tell you: a time of great disillusionment will come…it is inevitable. Why? There are lots of reasons. First of all, we are sinful, selfish creatures who want it the way we want it…and Jesus gives us no quarter! If you actually read Jesus, if you attempt to follow Jesus, He will demand that you deny yourself, pick up a cross, and leave much of what you hold dear behind in order to follow Him. That’s not “fun” or “easy” or “convenient” for anyone. It is costly, and that “cost of discipleship” can be very disillusioning for some people.
Another source of disillusionment is the Church…the “Jesus people.” People in churches are often not all that we would hope they would be…and that includes the pastors. Regretfully, those charged to be “the body of Christ” often sin egregiously in His name…and that is disillusioning to people…as it should be.

Another source of disillusionment is suffering and loss. Many people turn away from Jesus because they simply cannot accept that a loving Savior would allow their loved ones to die or to suffer traumatic events. I find this to be the number one source of disillusionment for most of the people that I meet.

Many, many people have walked away from Jesus because of their “season of disillusionment,” and they’ve never looked back. They have moved on. They have made up their minds. They are not even open to Christianity due to their season of disillusionment…and I get that. Some of those situations were REALLY disillusioning…I can understand how that would cause people to walk away.

But here’s the question that even the most disillusioned soul must contend with: “To whom shall we turn?” Who, other than Jesus, can forgive your sins; or empower you to forgive those who sin against you? Who, other than Jesus, has the power to deliver us from evil? Who, other than Jesus, provides any hope for the life to come? Who, other than Jesus, can save us from ourselves?

Listen: I get disillusionment. Are you kidding me? I’ve been serving the local church for 30 years. I could tell you some stories that would curl your hair! I have stared down the barrel of disillusionment more times than I can count. I have been tempted to walk away; to toss in the towel; to gravitate into some watered-down intellectual agnosticism. Trust me…I get it.

Why do I still follow Jesus after all these years and seasons of disillusionment? Peter captured it… Peter’s question keeps me tethered to Jesus during the dark night of the soul: to whom shall we turn? Like many of you, I have read loads of philosophers, theologians, and other religions. I have considered the claims of modern science and secular humanism. But here is what I can tell you: only Jesus has the words of eternal life! Only Jesus transforms human lives from darkness to light; from addiction to freedom; from anger to joy; from arrogance to humility. Only Jesus sets prisoners free…and I have believed and I have seen these things happen countless times in His name and only His name for three decades. He is the Holy One of God!

Now, does Jesus do everything I want Him to do on my timeline? No. Have I been disillusioned by prayers that were not answered as I had hoped? Yes. Do I sometimes walk away from something Jesus said scratching my head, hoping that Jesus didn’t actually say that? More than once. Have I been disappointed by the Church of Jesus? Frequently, and particularly with His choice of pastors…specifically ME as a pastor at Colonial! But friends, “to whom shall we turn?” There is no alternative to Jesus—not even a close second. He stands alone in all of
human history as the only Son of God; the only Resurrected One; the only One who intimidated
the demons of hell; the only One who had all the power and yet laid His power down to take the
punishment that I know I deserve.

Listen friends…I am sorry for your disillusionment. I’ve dealt with a fair bit of it myself…and
most of us in the church have been hurt, disappointed, and even disgusted at times in our
engagement with this thing called Christianity. But I would appeal to you: to whom will you
turn? You will place your hopes somewhere…you will yield to the authority of someone…you
will rest your confidence in some system of beliefs. To whom will shall you turn? And will you
hold that person or that system or that authority to the same standard that you held Jesus and His
Church?

For those of you who have walked away and yet find yourself listening to this message (thank
you by the way!), let me ask you a few questions: Does your new philosophy bring redemption
for the human soul? Does your new authority answer the deepest questions and address the
deepest longings of the human soul? Does your new system of belief give a reasonable account
for how things are and what we can observe in the world, including a universe that had a
beginning, the evidence of design and an intelligent source for the DNA written into every living
cell, the reality of good and evil, our fascination with love and beauty, and this unquenchable
desire for justice? Who else has a reasonable answer for the way things are?

Listen: I have no doubt that Peter had a lot of unanswered questions. He no doubt endured
significant seasons of disillusionment in his peasant, first-century middle-eastern existence. But
his answer to Jesus when asked if he wanted to leave was perfect: “To whom shall we go? You
have the words of eternal lie, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the
Holy One of God.” This is my answer in the dark night of the soul…it is the answer of many
throughout the world…and so we follow Him, even when it’s hard.

Come to Jesus friend, disillusionment and all. Come to Him, follow Him, believe in Him, and
you will see. His words bring Spirit and life. Jesus is Way, the Truth, and the Life. And there is
no other.

Will you pray with me?