

Sermon- The Offense of Jesus Christ

Scripture: John 6: 60-71

Sunday, April 22, 2018

In our journey through John 6, the last two sermons I spent sharing about Jesus' first I AM saying in John, "I AM the bread of life". And I mentioned last Sunday that there are two aspects to Jesus being "the bread of life". First what Jesus wants to communicate is that he is more than the provider of physical bread. Jesus is the provider of a kind of bread that gives rise to eternal life. That is the positive aspect of the "bread of life" message. But there is a second dimension to Jesus being the "The Bread of Life". It also means that to access the power that this Bread can give you, you have to own up to your own sin problem and then acknowledge that the solution to your sin problem is Christ's self-sacrifice for you. You have to take responsibility for your sin and also accept the solution of Christ's broken body. And this is harder than it seems.

And that brings us to today's passage. Because as Jesus is speaking, he can hear the murmurs in the room are starting to build. So Jesus pauses to ask the people listening to him, "are you offended?" Jesus then tells them, "if you are offended, what are you going to think when you see the son of man ascend to heaven again". What he is saying by that follow up question is that, "one day, I am going to be vindicated. And when that day comes, if you have not bothered to actually do what I said you should do because you were so focused on the fact that you felt offended, then what are you going to do on that day when everything I have said comes true and you see it happening with your own eyes? Then Jesus goes deeper. Jesus warns his listeners that there is a contrast between the Spirit with a capital S, and human effort or the human spirit. He tells them that only the spirit with the capital S gives life. The human spirit or human effort accomplishes nothing. Jesus could not have struck a bigger contrast between the two spirits. But having said that Jesus also knows that there are two kinds of people in his

audience. A big majority who don't believe his words and a small group that does. And Jesus knows that in this encounter between him and his listeners, there is something happening at the spiritual level.

Now if you had special goggles to see spiritual activity you would be able to see that at the spiritual level, when Jesus is speaking either people are being drawn to Jesus by his Heavenly Father, or else something deeply negative is being stirred up in them. And to bring this battle to the surface, Jesus asks the crowd this very pointed question, "does this offend you?". This question does it for most of the people. Because honestly, they were offended. Most people don't want to be told that they are so messed up that a someone had to make a substitute death penalty for them. They were offended by the idea that this was the only way. And they were offended enough that they could not pretend to be polite in front of Jesus any more. So they just get up and leave.

Now verse 66 says his disciples turned away and left him, but it is referring to the larger circle of people following him, not the 12. But the next thing he does is turn to the 12 and ask if they too want to desert him? To that question, you have Peter speaking up and saying, "You have the words that give eternal life, and we know you are the Holy One of God. To whom would we go, Lord?"

Two very distinct human reactions to Jesus. One set of people are offended by what Jesus says about them and walk away. And then you have Peter speaking on behalf of the 11, saying you are the source of eternal life and we see no other choice but to follow you.

So what is going on on the spiritual battle field of each persons heart that results in these two very different responses to Jesus? To explore that we need to take a deeper look into what is going on at the heart level, when God's Spirit comes into contact with the human spirit.

First, let's see what the Bible says about the human spirit. Romans 3:10 says "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE. Jer 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? And [Ephesians 2:3](#) "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." So the Bible is saying, the human spirit is basically sick. On its own it only knows to indulge in worldly desires and we have no natural righteousness. That means on our own we will not be able to follow the right path or the path that God would want us to take in life. That is what these verses are saying.

But let's change gears for a moment and take in the world's perspective on human nature. Well, the world's view is very different from the Biblical view. One of the dominant ways the world views human nature is through the philosophy of humanism. This is something that arose in the 12th century in Italy. One of the things that humanism believes is that human beings are basically good. Humanism believes that we have the ability to make good choices in our own life and we have the ability to improve the world and the human condition. Saul McLeod says this about humanism, "people are basically good, and have an innate need to make themselves and the world better. The humanistic approach emphasizes the personal worth of the individual, the centrality of human values, and the creative, active nature of human beings. The approach is optimistic and focuses on noble human capacity to overcome hardship, pain and despair¹". Well, you can see how this view is very attractive to us. The idea is that if we are inherently good, all we have to do is invoke our own "higher angels" and we will be able to fix ourselves and solve the world's problems. It is this appeal to our higher angels that politicians and poets have been making for centuries. It is an appeal that boosts our

¹ Humanism by [Saul McLeod](#), updated 2015, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html>

spirits and inspires us to run faster, jump higher and be stronger than we have ever been before. And if that sounded like something you have heard before, you are right it is the motto of the Olympics, higher, faster and stronger, the celebration of the human spirit. The problem with this view though is that, if human beings are basically good and we have everything in us to fix ourselves and the world, we don't need a savior. We become our own savior.

The humanistic impulse in us is very important to recognize. Inside everyone of us is a voice telling us that we are basically good people and we don't need a savior. We can save ourselves. Now just because humanism only became a defined philosophical idea in the 1300's, it does not mean that before that time, humanistic thinking did not exist. Humanistic thinking goes all the way back to the tower of babel where the people banded together and decided that they would make a name for themselves by making a tower that could reach God. While it was not obvious to them, if God had not stopped them they would be killed by this tower falling on them. But pride in the abilities of the self did not start even at babel. It started right in the garden of Eden. You see the first sin was Eve falling for the idea that, if it looks good to ***your*** eyes and if it promises to give ***you*** god-like abilities then it does not matter that God has said about it, just go for it. That idea appeals to us because in our nature we think we have every right to play God. Humanistic thinking is embedded in the deepest part of human nature.

So imagine how it would sound to those people sitting in the synagogue in Capernaum and hearing Jesus tell them that the only way they could possibly have eternal life is if they accept that they are so messed up that they need God to come down from heaven and somehow make a human sacrifice to overcome the penalty of their sins. You see the remedy speaks to the extent of the problem. Jesus laid out what the remedy. They could see that it meant they had a big problem. And that was just too difficult to admit. The people were thinking the Messiah was coming to take out those people over there who

were the cause of all our problems. They never imagined that the Messiah would come and shine a bright light on their own mess.

So what was the end result of that sermon? The end result was that Jesus lost everyone in the congregation. At that point only the 12 remained. And you know that the 12 is actually more accurately considered 11, because even though Judas was still hanging around, his heart had left Jesus. From his point of point of view, he was the one betrayed by Jesus. But that is the topic of another sermon.

Now given what we know about human nature, I don't think it is all that surprising that everybody left Jesus at this point. What is amazing is that when Jesus turns to the 12 and asks them to their face, "are you going to leave me as well?" Peter says, "no, where will we go? You have the words to eternal life". What you are seeing there is something really amazing. Right there on the battle ground of Peter's soul, there was a war taking place between Peter's own Spirit and the Holy Spirit. And somehow the Holy Spirit wins. This is the real mystery because we don't know how it happens. Is it because the Holy Spirit overpowers Peter's spirit? If the Holy Spirit overcomes Peter's Spirit why does he not over power Judas' spirit? Did Peter allow the Holy Spirit to win somehow? Then why do some people allow the Holy Spirit to win and other people don't? We just don't fully understand all that. All I can say is that the spiritual battle for each human soul is an incredible mystery of our faith.

But we do know this. When Jesus makes his invitation to people and tells them that he is the Bread of Life, we have to deal with the most offensive scandalous claims of Jesus. And the offensive scandalous claim of Jesus is we are not the walking embodiment of the triumph of the human spirit. We are nothing more than spiritual corpses. And it is only when Jesus dies on the cross for us and we somehow internalize Christ's sacrifice that we suddenly begin to have a real spiritual life. The scandal of the cross is that, such

a drastic remedy is required to fix us so called “good” people. The offense of the cross is that all the other ways to salvation are bridges to nowhere.

So should that blunt message make us feel good or bad? Well, Jesus is very clear. It is not his intent to make us feel bad. In John 3:17 Jesus makes it very clear when he says, “I did not come to judge the world but to save it.” But you can only be saved if you admit your problem. It is like determining if the glass is half empty or half full. The ones who get the message are the ones who say, yes I know I have to admit my sin. But look on the bright side, even I can have eternal life! The glass half empty people will say, I am not going to admit my sin and I don’t need your remedy. Admitting I need someone else to save me is going to turn everything I believe about human nature upside down and that is too much for me to do.

Now if you are sharing the Gospel with someone, you may not know if the person you are talking too in a glass half full or half empty person. But all you can do is share your own journey about how you came to grips with why you needed a Savior. How did you go from the “how dare you offend me with your solution for me” to “I need you or I need you Jesus”? How did the scandal of the cross become the salvation of the cross for you? Reflect on your own journey. Learn to share that story. Who knows how many people might shift from being glass half empty to glass half full people? In these last days, know that God will pour out his Spirit and many will turn to Him. Let us pray that God pours out His Spirit in a big way in our neighborhood. Let us pray that God overpowers many human spirits in the battle grounds of our souls. And let us pray that we will learn to share how Jesus won us over. We want people to move from focusing on the scandal of the cross to the salvation of the cross. As we go in obedience towards the lost and as God draws people to himself, My the eyes of many be mysteriously opened as they confess, “Jesus in you are the words of life, whom can we turn to but

you?" Where there once was offense, let there will be eternal life. And may eternal life bloom all around us. Let us pray.