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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church  
14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Year B/Proper 16  
August 26, 2018  
Text: John 6:56-69

“Give Me Jesus”

There is an old Negro Spiritual that we have sung from time to time here at St. Barnabas that goes like this:

*In the morning when I rise, in the morning when I rise,  
In the morning when I rise, give me Jesus.  
Give me Jesus, give me Jesus,  
You may have all this world, give me Jesus.*

Yes, “give me Jesus!” When it was all said and done, this was the bottom line Simon Peter proclaimed when he answered Jesus’ question this morning, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life...”

After several weeks we have finally come to the end of the Bread of Life Discourse. And we’ve heard that phrase, “bread of life,” over and over again. Perhaps John repeats it until he is sure that we are taking Jesus’ words to heart, that we have come to the understanding that Jesus is the one for whom we must rely for life now and in the age to come. But I wonder if our understanding of these passages make us any more knowledgeable; any more accepting of this truth than those who were present in the actual hearing of his voice.

“I am the living bread.” “I am the bread of life” is how Jesus described himself in at the beginning of John’s sixth chapter, this after having fed a massive crowd. Their bellies full, they clamored for more only to become disenchanted as Jesus declared that he himself is better than the manna their ancestors received in the desert and that even more wonderful, all who eat his flesh and drink his blood will have eternal life. The crowd began to complain and not only complain but shrink in number because his teaching became increasingly difficult to grasp. And it seems from today’s lesson that the crowd had finally dissipated and all who are left to hear him were those disciples who accompanied him to the synagogue. Even then we are told that many of them were offended. The truth Jesus spoke was unreal. Scandalous. Difficult. Who in their right minds could accept it? And

John tells us that “many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.” And Jesus turned to the twelve and asked, “Do you also wish to go away?”

We can only imagine Jesus’ disappointment but he doesn’t condemn or force them to believe but allows his closest followers to search their minds and hearts.

“Do you also wish to go away?” How might we have answered that question? What would be our surest and truest answer now if Jesus stood before us today in the flesh? What would be or is our answer when we are alone deep in our thoughts? In our prayers? Have there been times when we have said to ourselves: ‘This is too much for me, Jesus?’ If we are honest, most of us can probably say ‘Yes. It is too much.’

It is too much when life deals us a blow. When our circumstances change and disappointments can be found at every turn. When a loved one is ill and we wonder why he or she is so sick and whether there is a chance they will get better. When we hear of a close friend or neighbor who we know as smart, responsible, and competent suddenly loses their job. Or relationships have gone sour and nothing but nothing seems to serve as a healing balm. At those times we find our corporate and individual sensibilities and moral stability tested. New scandals seem to present themselves daily and truths are no longer “true truths” depending on the teller. We turn on the news or watch the internet and we find that those who have climbed to the heights, those we look to for leadership, as inspiration, have fallen from grace-celebrities, politicians, civil servants, church hierarchy, and the like. More instances where things could have been solved more humanly, more civilly but hate, arrogance and violence overruled better judgements and solutions. And the list goes on.

If we are honest, we face all these tensions and unresolved answers and just life itself sometimes with a thread of faith. We are sore tempted to give up and we ask ‘What is the point of all of this? Is anyone listening? Does anybody care? Does God even care?’ And we find ourselves disenchanted much like the disciples who turned away.

But this is when we remember today’s passage and take note of how Jesus sat with his closest disciples and asked the question and allowed them to search their hearts. Search and then come to stay, to abide with faith in him.

Jesus allows us to search our hearts and come to faith as well. To respond and believe in him who says to us “Come to me all who are weary and heavy

burdened.” In him who says “I am the Good Shepherd.” In him who says “I am the Bread of Life.”

Often in the gospels we come across stories that we can only imagine were difficult not only the disciples but for Jesus himself. The sixth chapter of John makes it clear that it is not always easy to hear the words of Jesus and to follow him. But by the grace of God in Christ the invitation is always there; the invitation to put all our hopes and trust in him; to abide in him as he abides in us; that we his followers might hear God’s word and partake in the receiving of Christ’s Body and Blood which gives us life and helps us in turn to give witness to God’s work in the world.

“Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away? And Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to who can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

I don’t know about you but when it is all said and done, give me Jesus!

Jesus asks, “Do you also wish to go away?” What is YOUR answer?  
Amen!