

Lord, To Whom Shall We Go?

Unfortunately, when it comes to making an authentic commitment to Jesus Christ, many people walk away at the first sign of resistance. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John Jesus feeds five thousand men and possibly an equal number of women and children with five small loaves and two fish. The impact of that event on the multitude was enormous. They knew someone special was in their midst and they wanted to make him king. When Jesus saw that they were getting carried away in their response to this event, he retreated across the Sea of Galilee to his home in Capernaum. People came looking for him there. Jesus knew they had come to find him because they had been impressed with this miracle so, he decided to separate the sheep from the goats, the highly committed from the fair weather casually interested. The people then weren't much different than people today. They wanted the benefits, but not the cost. Jesus wanted them to know that the easy part was over. Now it was time to tackle the nitty-gritty of what a commitment to his kingdom meant. And most of the crowd would have nothing to do with it. In verse 66 we read these words, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." Those are important words. "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." They had freely followed him, now they were freely walking away, just as many do today! Jesus will never give up on you, but Jesus will never force you to follow! This was a turning point in Jesus' life and ministry. He knew, of course, that it would happen this way, but still it must have been disappointing.

The way of Jesus is not for everybody. Jesus is for everybody, but not everybody is for Jesus. Even some of those who declare they follow Jesus don't really go with him all the way. A rather loud and dogmatic man who attended a different church approached a minister at a public event and said to him, "I want to go to a church that is Bible-believing. Do you understand me? A place where the preacher is not trying to tip toe around the hard lessons of Jesus, a preacher who will lay it on the line, not try to water down the Gospel. I want a preacher who will be bold and put it out there, the full measure of the Bible, not hold back a lick. I want a preacher who will not let sinners slide and will call them out by name. I want the full Gospel. I don't want a preacher to skirt around the message of Jesus." The pastor said, "You want the full Gospel! Yes, absolutely the man responded. The pastor said, "You mean the part about selling all you have and giving it to the poor?" Amazingly the man was stunned and said, "Well, not that part!" Many of Jesus' so-called disciples would slink away if they were put on the spot about some of Jesus more difficult teachings. But the way of Jesus isn't for everyone.

But For Those Committed To Following Christ Until The End, We Can't Imagine Anything Else. We have found in Jesus Christ everything we will ever need. We have found healing and hope and happiness in him that we never could have found any other place. When the crowd had gone away and Jesus was left with the original twelve who had followed him since the early days in Galilee, Jesus turned to them and asked, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" It was, of course, Simon Peter who spoke up, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the holy one of God." What a magnificent statement of faith! No wonder Jesus loved Simon Peter. Simon wasn't perfect. There would come a time when he would let Christ down. But isn't that true of all of us? No matter how intent we are on following Christ there will be times when we will falter. We are not Christ, just as Peter was not Christ. That does not mean, however, that deep in our hearts we do not want to serve Christ. He is our Lord. He is our Master. He is the one who has the words of eternal life. He is the one whom we believe is the Holy One of God.

Jesus is asking you today, "Do you want to leave too, do you?" Will you answer like Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God." Despite hardships, despite doubts, despite the distractions of the world will take up the cross of Christ and follow where He leads?