

May the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Divine One, You are our strength and our Redeemer. Amen

Please be seated.

“John 6:56–69 presents a controversy arising from Jesus’ claim to be the bread of life. “

This is the opening statement from a commentary written by Peter Clavor Ajer, a theologian from Lutheran

Seminary in Chicago Ill. Ajer goes on to say this: “Jesus’ teaching did not draw all people to him but alienated many, so they left his company. Jesus, the living bread, claims that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood abides in him and he [abides] in [them]. It’s important to note that this statement, like many others in the Gospel of John, is symbolic. It’s not about literal consumption [of the flesh of Jesus] which [draws us into] the deep, intimate relationship [one has] with Jesus. To receive from Jesus “the saving power” he gives his followers, the believer must “feed on him.”

The expression “feeding on Jesus” ([consuming] his flesh and blood) best captures the intimacy [of this] relationship. To feed on Jesus is to “absorb his teaching, his character, his mind, and his ways; [and to] appropriate, [to take on] the virtue [found] in [Jesus] ~~him~~ till his mind becomes our mind

and his ways [become] our ways; till we think somewhat as he would do if he were in our place, and [so we] can be and do what without him we would not be or [be able to] do [ourselves]; and ~~this because~~ [that] his power has passed into us and become our power.”¹ Eating and drinking [are] metaphors [which] best express oneness, intimacy, and the best way to be part of Jesus’ life.

Jesus indicates [to his followers just how profound this] relationship [is by] comparing it to the relationship between Jesus and God the Creator (6:57), which [we understand to be both] perfect and permanent [in every way]. Partaking of Jesus’ flesh and blood [symbolically in the bread and wine] means establishing and remaining in this relationship, [~~lasting and deepening to all eternity~~], and enabling the believer to live forever.

As usual, every teaching of Jesus and the signs he performs lead to division; while some people believe in him, some leave his company because they find Jesus’ statement unacceptable.”

Dr Thomas Clothier writes this:

“Jesus did not tone down His rhetoric when He delivered His Bread of Life Discourse. He spoke the truth, even though it

offended His hearers (John 6:66) resulting in them turning away.

Not only did Jesus not tone down His preaching, He also did not run after those who left and attempt to persuade them to continue following Him. Instead, He turned His attention to the twelve and asked, *“Do you want to go away as well?”* He did this as a way of encouraging their fragile faith. They could have been affected by the actions of many, or even lead by the decision taken by any one of those who chose to leave, even if that one had been one of Jesus’ closest followers, the twelve disciples themselves.

As usual, Peter spoke up first for the group and openly confessed, *“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.”* What a confessional statement. Let’s look at [what Peter is reported to have said and break it into] specific parts in order to grasp the sum and scope of its significance.

“Lord, to whom shall we go?” Peter was convinced that to follow another teacher was ludicrous. His question was rhetorical. The answer was obvious. There was no other Messiah for them to follow. Others may leave, but they would not. [This was a] rather ominous declaration in light of what

we know of Peter in the narratives to follow [when he denies Jesus three times].

“You have the words of eternal life.” Peter continues by confessing that Jesus alone ~~presently and actively~~ possesses the words and statement of eternal life. No one else has this gift.

“And we have believed.” Peter confesses that the twelve have believed in Jesus. This is not entirely true because Jesus will immediately indicate that there is one among them who is a devil, [of course] referring to Judas Iscariot (John 6:71).

“And have come to know.” This is a parallel statement to what Peter just said. Peter says that the twelve understand who He is. But do they truly understand? Future statements by the writer of John’s gospel will [soon] indicate otherwise.

However, Peter does conclude with this excellent statement: *“you are the Holy One of God.”* Peter says that Jesus exists as the [One] set apart from sin, [as] Messiah, who originates solely from God the ~~Father~~-Creator.

Peter, a man of both strengths and weaknesses, is an excellent example of faith. He is not perfect but has his moments. He can misunderstand situations and will even deny Jesus at the arrest and trial, but he often gets it right. In

Peter's mind, no one can teach better than the teacher of excellence; followers must stick to Jesus, to his words that create a deeper, intimate relationship with him." This is from Dr. Thomas Clothier.

Dr. John Walvoord writes, "Peter was confident of the apostles' commitment to Jesus as the Holy One of God. This title is unusual (in Mark 1:24, a demon addressed Jesus [in] that way). It suggests Jesus' transcendence ("the Holy One") and His representation of the ~~Father~~-Creator ("of God"); thus it is another way of confessing Him as Messiah. Peter knew this by a special work of the ~~Father~~ Creator (cf. Matt. 16:17)."

Further to this, Dr. R. C. Sproul explains, "Although the Gospel narratives make it plain that Peter and the others did not fully understand Jesus until after His resurrection, before then they nevertheless understood important truths about Jesus that others failed to grasp. Peter said they would stay because Jesus alone had the words of eternal life and was "the Holy One of God," the Messiah (vv. 68–69). They had some sense that Christ was the source of life and that they could find fellowship with God in no one else."

You see, the unbelievers missed the point, so they left Jesus' company. Jesus is losing followers because of his hard teachings, but is not stepping back despite this [loss]. He uses

the occasion to challenge his disciples whom God has drawn to him. As I said a minute ago, He also knows that one of them (Judas) will betray him.

Jesus' teachings may be challenging, but he does not shy away from them. He continues to offer hard truths [which], if we remain with him, can profoundly benefit us. Are we willing to stay with our Teacher even when his teachings seem complicated? Can we, like Peter, say, "To whom shall we go?" and can we commit to Jesus, the teacher of excellence, whose word gives life? Can we embrace the relationship, "eating his flesh and drinking his blood," so that we maintain a deeper relationship with him?

Sproule goes on to say, "We believe and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God" is Peter's ~~portrait~~ [testament] of the process through which they have come to believe in Jesus (6:69). This beautifully expresses the process of believing. "It starts with a venture that what one thinks could be true, and then, in a little while, something surer and steadier than the initial faith, faith grown to knowledge, a knowledge gained from facts of one's personal experience."² Peter's unwavering belief and commitment to Jesus at this point should inspire readers."

Remember the mantra I gave you last week? The one I remember from my early days at seminary. "Salvation by the

grace of God through faith in the gift of redemption given to us through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ". That's what this is all about. And Jesus said it best – "Believe in God, believe also in me".

So, do you confess Jesus as the Holy One of God? As the writer of John's gospel says in John 14:6; and again in the Book of Acts, "There is life in no one else". Believe in God, believe also in Jesus, the Son of the Most High God. Feed on Him and receive the gift of eternal life.

Amen.