



Introduction

In today's gospel many people take offense at Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus' disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John's gospel for Peter's confession of faith. "To whom can we go?" asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. "You have the words of eternal life." In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,

so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

In the name of ✙ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen**

Opening Hymn ELW # 810/LBW # 503

O Jesus, I Have Promised

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

In the Near East, covenant means “agreement” or “alliance.” It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 34:15-22

- ¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous,
and God’s ears are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶**The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to erase the remembrance of them from the earth.**
- ¹⁷The righteous cry, and the LORD hears them
and delivers them from all their troubles.
- ¹⁸**The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves those whose spirits are crushed.**
- ¹⁹Many are the troubles of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers them from every one.
- ²⁰**God will keep safe all their bones;
not one of them shall be broken.**
- ²¹Evil will bring death to the wicked
and those who hate the righteous will be punished.
- ²²**O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants,
and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: John 6:56-69

The “hard saying” that offends Jesus’ disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: “To whom shall we go?”

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Who can believe this? That is the question that some of the disciples of Jesus asked. Who can believe this stuff about who Jesus claims to be? The crowds – those who have been following Jesus – some of them for quite some time now – are also people who have known Jesus all his life. They know he is the son of a carpenter – who now claims to be the Bread of Life. This is the person they thought might be the messiah – but the messiah they want is a messiah who will lead the battle to rid the promised land of the Romans.

Jesus is not proving to be who they thought he was. “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.” Jesus is calling them to worship, not war. Jesus is calling them to love, not fight. Jesus wants to lead them to the Father, not to war.

It is not just what Jesus is telling them that is hard to believe; it is Jesus himself who they are rejecting. Jesus tells them that he is the bread of life, and they reject him. Jesus is the word become flesh, and they reject him. How about you and me? Do we find this Jesus too hard to accept? Do we want to reject him too?

Jesus looks at the twelve and ask them if they are leaving too. Is this too hard for them? Now we know that they are not the most perceptive of people, and often we hear the stories of Jesus and the twelve and wonder why they don’t see the obvious and agree when Jesus calls them out for their lack of faith. But here Peter – and again it is Peter who speaks the truth – says, "Lord, to whom 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."

In our Old Testament lesson, we hear Joshua say these words, "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. These words – these phrases – are the words of Holy Scripture – the Word of God – The Word made flesh – these are the words of eternal life. Jesus commands us to partake of his body and blood. It might be hard to understand this as a command, but it is. Jesus only issues a few commands – Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. Go and baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Take and eat. These are the commands of Jesus. The first two are what Jesus call the great commandments, and the other two are the sacraments which we hold to be near and dear to the church.

To follow Jesus; to serve the LORD; we must follow these commands. We must put God above all things. We must love our neighbor as ourselves. We must take seriously the sacraments of the church. Baptism is where God names us, claims us, adopts us as his very own, and marks us with the seal of the Holy Spirit. Holy Communion is the meal where we receive Christ, where we abide in him and he in us, where our sins are forgiven, and where we are promised eternal life.

David Lose says it this way, "You see, here's the thing: although God's word is most surely a part of the liturgy and hymns, the prayers and our preaching, yet even in these important elements of our shared worship it may sometimes be hidden and hard to hear. Yet in Baptism and the Lord's Supper God has bound God's own self to the Word and through the Word to the simple, common, and ordinary elements of water, bread, and wine – the very stuff of everyday life – so what we who are simple, common, ordinary, and everyday people may receive him with confidence."

When these seem too hard for us to follow, whenever we think they are too hard; whenever we think we know better, we should call to mind Peter's words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 758/LBW # 464

You Are the Way

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

God of courage, bless all leaders of your church. Make them ready to proclaim the gospel of peace and strengthen them to preach your loving word.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, bless fields and orchards. Protect the land from drought and bring life-giving rain to support growth. Instruct your people in wise treatment of the world you have provided for all your creatures. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, bless all who seek justice between nations and peoples. Give guidance to bridge-builders, heal divisions, and inspire cooperation in times of crisis, disaster, and war. We pray especially for the people of Haiti and Afghanistan.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, bless all who are in any need. Accompany all who are lonely and feeling abandoned and remind them of your abiding presence. Accompany all who are persecuted and exploited and open us to their cries. Give healing and hope to those we name now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of change, bless our transitions. Guide all who are embarking on new stages in life such as a new job, new school, or new community. Sustain enduring friendships and kindle new relationships and interests. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of comfort, bless all who mourn the deaths of their beloved ones. We give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us. Renew our confidence in your promise of resurrection and life in the world to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn ELW # 805 /LBW # 495

Lead On, O King Eternal!

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Worship adapted from sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS027356.

Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.