In this sixth week of lessons about Jesus as the Bread of Life, we come to a crossroads. We come to a point where Jesus’s teachings become hard to swallow. We come to the point where the disciples realize that following Jesus isn’t just about seeing Him perform miracles that meet physical needs. Following Jesus isn’t just about observing this man from afar. Following Jesus is about living by His example – the example that takes Him to the cross out of His love for us. Following Jesus will mean having to make some difficult choices. It will mean having to wrestle with tough issues – what to do about poverty, whether to support a war, what to do about immigrants or refugees, whether a particular business deal is fair to everyone, what career God is calling us too. It will mean having to love everyone – even that person who hurt your feelings or who stole from you or who has an obnoxious personality. Following Jesus means being open to how Jesus might change us.

Jesus is asking his disciples “are you all the way in with me” or not. Jesus is asking his disciples the same question that God through Joshua asked the Israelites. They’d all seen all the miracles. They’d all received the gift of manna just like all those followers of Jesus has received the bread from the feeding of the 5,000. But following the Lord isn’t just about what we receive. Following the Lord isn’t a spectator sport where we sit around and watch the miracles. Following the Lord is about living as Jesus did every day, loving God first and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Soren  Kierkegaard, the 19th century Danish theologian, said this about the difference between admirers and followers.

“If you have any knowledge at all of human nature, you know that those who only admire the truth will, when danger appears, become traitors. The admirer is infatuated with the false security of greatness; but if there is any inconvenience or trouble, he pulls back. Admiring the truth, instead of following it, is just as dubious a fire as the fire of erotic love, which at the turn of the hand can be changed into exactly the opposite—to hate, jealousy, and revenge. Christ, however, never asked for admirers, worshipers, or adherents. He consistently spoke of ‘followers’ and ‘disciples.’ [[1]](#endnote-1)

Certainly God gives us many good gifts. God chose us long before God asks us to choose Him. Jesus chose to come to earth to become Incarnate for us and in us. Jesus chose to love us so much that He died for us. God has given us much. But sometimes life is hard. Sometimes making a decision to act as Jesus would is difficult. We can’t just choose God when the going is good and abandon him when the going gets tough.

If we choose to take on the name of Christian, Christ asks us to live into it every day. Christ asks us to always seek to do what shows love of God and love of neighbor, grappling with problems and issues when we’re unsure what course we are called to do. Christ asks us to take a humble stance if it means we can heal the hurts of others. Christ asks us to be courageous and bold in fighting injustice. Christianity isn’t just about feeling good, it’s about seeking to bring about God’s goodness in every part of the world even if this quest is unpopular.

Janet Hunt, in Dancing With the Word writes the following

“I am called to wonder every day as I begin a new day:

• Will I choose to live in kindness or will I let old hurts taint my responses to those around me?

• Will I close my office door or will I respond to the cry of pain in the outer office? Or on the other end of the phone

line? Or in our neighborhood and beyond?

• Will I work for justice in the world or will I cower in my fear that I might offend?

• Will I entrust to God a portion of what I have been given or will I hoard it all away in fear?

• Will I begin and end my day in prayer or will I try to go it alone?

And on and on ...

Oh yes, with Joshua and Simon Peter we do choose “whom we will serve— whom it is we will follow.” [[2]](#endnote-2)

I pray that each of us makes the same choices that Joshua and Peter did. I pray that each of us chooses every day and in every way to serve the Lord.

Amen

1. Quote found on Preachingtoday.com [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Janet Hunt, Dancing With the Word, , Found in Synthesis. A Weekly Resource for Preaching and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition, PNMSI Publishing Co., Inc**.**

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)