

Two Kinds of People

12th Sun. after Pent. – 08/15/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: John 6:51-69 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 64-65, [Jesus said,] **“There are some of you who do not believe”. ... “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father”.**

Introduction

- ⌘ There’s a humorous take on the whole idea that there are only two kinds of people in the world: the first is those who think that there are two kinds of people in the world, and the second is those who don’t!
 - ➔ But we all know that we live in a world filled with variation, assortment, and choice. To acknowledge that should then mean that there are all kinds of people in the world, right? Just look at the evidence among the people that you and I personally know. There are many differences – gifts, talents, good qualities and bad, physical differences – not either/or, but shades and varieties. It’s a good thing most of the time, that we are not used to classifying people as either one sort or another.
- ⌘ But, when people are viewed exclusively from a spiritual perspective, according to God’s Word and God’s view of all people in the world, there are only two kinds of people in the world: believers in Christ and unbelievers.

I. Believers have life; unbelievers are already dead

- ⌘ This distinction comes out, in part, in our Gospel today.
 - ➔ But there are other passages that make the same distinction. For example, in Psalm 34:15-16, there is a distinction made between “the righteous” and “those who do evil”. Our Old Testament Reading also speaks of two kinds of people, the “wise” and the “scoffer” (Prov. 9:7–9). This is followed by today’s Epistle Reading from Ephesians 5:15, in which Paul refers to people as either “unwise” or “wise”. And he sounds a lot like John when he speaks of “darkness” and “light” in verses 8-11: “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them”.
- ⌘ Now in our Gospel Reading today, we pick up the final section of Jesus teaching the Jews about Himself in John, chapter six, that He is the “bread of life”. Throughout John’s entire Gospel, he distinguishes between two kinds of people in the world.
 - ➔ Since Jesus just fed more than 5,000 people the day before with only five loaves of bread, and because they have now followed Him across the sea of Galilee, hoping to receive another meal of bread, Jesus sticks with that image of food and drink to teach them the much bigger and more important lesson that distinguishes between the only two kinds of people that exist.
 - ➔ He says, there are those who believe in Him for who He truly is, that by their belief they then partake of Jesus for true life as a person would partake of bread and drink to sustain their earthly lives. Verse 53: “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you’”.
 - The flesh and blood Jesus is talking here about is His own physical body that would soon be nailed and crucified upon the cross in payment for the sins of the world. To eat and drink of

Jesus is picture language for believing; it is to trust that His sacrifice actually could and would pay for and forgive their own personal guilt through the Spirit's gift of faith.

→ But those who will not believe in and trust that Jesus' sacrifice is of any value to them – they are spiritually dead. They refuse to spiritually eat and drink of Jesus' flesh and blood and thereby reject the gift of true life. Earlier in John 3:18 we hear this from Jesus, "Whoever believes in [God's Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God".

✘ And Jesus shows that this distinction is not about bloodline, ethnic background, or even external church membership. In the later verses of our text He says that even among His own disciples, the distinction between these two types of people holds true. There are those disciples who believe Jesus and His words, and others who do not. Verse 64, "But there are some of you who do not believe", to which John adds an explanation that Jesus "knew from the beginning" which of His followers would not believe – even identifying that one of them, Judas, who would betray Him.

→ Well, for some of them, this was enough. Those who did not believe felt the truth of Jesus' judgment stab them in the heart and verse 66 says, "After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him". Wow! Even Jesus, the perfect proclaimer of God's Word; the best evangelist of all time, had the door of unbelief and rejection slammed in His face.

✘ It's then that Jesus turns to the remaining disciples in verse 67 and asks, "Do you want to go away as well?" To which Simon Peter answered in the words of the Alleluia that we sing in Divine Service, setting two, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (v. 68), followed by this final confession of faith, "and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God" (v. 69). That is one kind of person.

→ In the very next verses, which are not a part of our official Reading, "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil'. He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray Him" (vv. 70-71). That is the other type of person.

→ There are only two options, no more. Jesus has declared it Himself: the believer is righteous because he/she eats and drinks of Jesus in faith and has life and receives forgiveness of sin. And the unbeliever is the one who rejects Jesus along with the devil and dies, forever separated from the life-giving "bread" of life.

II. Converting one to the other only done by God

✘ This clear distinction between the two kinds of people is why we see and hear so much emphasis in the Church on mission work, because if we take this distinction seriously between believers and unbelievers, why would any true believer not desire that those he knows would come to faith in Jesus and receive the gift of life!

→ Just as Jesus wanted all people to feed upon Him in faith and move from unbelief to belief, so He wants you and me to have the same passion; the same desire individually and together as His Church.

✘ But, we must hear John's Gospel carefully so that we understand exactly how an unbeliever comes to partake of Jesus in faith. You see, it is not possible, according to Scripture, for people to "decide" or "choose" in themselves to believe. Why not? for the same reason that a dead rock cannot "decide" for itself to come to life – they're dead.

→ In last week's Reading from the first half of John six, Jesus says in verse 37 that those who are believers in the first place are those whom "the Father gives" to Him. And then in verse 44

Jesus reiterates that truth saying, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day”. Now in verse 65 of today’s Reading, Jesus repeats this truth regarding the nature of His Church’s mission, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father”.

→ So it is a fact directly from God Himself, unbelievers simply never can make themselves believers. Faith in Jesus is not my work! It is exclusively a gift from God!

✘ Equally true and important then is this: No believer, including you and I, is called or capable of converting an unbeliever to belief.

→ I know, I can already hear Christians getting all riled up, “Well, if that’s the case Pastor, then why does the Bible tell us to go out and proclaim the Good News about Jesus? Why are we to invite people to repent of their sins and believe that Jesus is Savior of the world?”

→ Because God, in His wisdom and love wants you and me and all His people to share in the joy of His conversion work. It’s like the young boy who tells his friend that his mom makes the best chocolate brownies in all of the world. It would be just cruel to describe how good they are but then not invite his friend to come inside and partake of the treat with him. And so he does invite him in, “Come and see for yourself!” Yet, that boy is very clear, they are mom’s brownies, made by mom and offered by mom alone!

✘ A good example is the way that Paul proclaimed the Gospel to the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17:15–34. Paul was invited to bring his message before the ancient philosophers on Mars Hill. And all he did was simply proclaim that Jesus is the Christ and that God raised Him up from the dead. A few of those men believed, while most did not.

→ It might seem strange to say it, but Paul was not much of a success by this world’s standards; nevertheless, he was faithful to the calling that God had given to him; that is to proclaim Jesus and let the Holy Spirit do His own work of feeding souls with “the living bread that came down from heaven” (v.51).

→ Later, Paul would write to the Corinthians in chapter 2:14, “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”.

✘ No one can believe in Jesus Christ in and of themselves. The Holy Spirit creates faith through the Word, and specifically through the Gospel message of Jesus’ “flesh and blood” sacrifice; that is as Jesus says in verse 51, “the bread that I will give for the life of the world”.

→ Martin Luther communicates this so beautifully in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed when he writes, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith” (Luther’s Small Catechism, p. 17).

→ If I were to put that in my own words today, I might say, “I believe that by nature I am one kind of people, an unbeliever, who could never make myself the other kind. But the Holy Spirit alone has done it; made me a believer by His almighty power and grace!”

Conclusion

✘ When you and I invite people to church; to come and hear about Jesus, we are not thinking that we are working to convert them, but only that we are inviting them to come and partake of the greatest life-giving treat in all the world; a treat made by our Triune God; a treat that is the very Bread of life!

→ In doing that we are then giving a witness to what Christ has already done for us. *Sharing God's Word and Serving All!* That's the mission we are called to be about. We want everyone to become the other kind of people; to believe in Jesus Christ as his/her Savior.

✘ Now for those who are confirmed believers; those who have learned His Word and have publicly confessed their faith in Jesus, He presents Himself before you this morning both in Word and Sacrament. From His altar He serves us with a physical reminder; a very real supper of His body and blood in which He feeds us His forgiveness, and He strengthens our faith to face all that this world has to throw at us.

→ Many people today frankly are just as offended by this as those who heard Him the day He spoke these words. Thousands; millions of people are still turning away from Jesus in unbelief every day. But we who believe, how do we respond to their challenge; to the world's and the devil's enticements to follow after them in unbelief?

→ We respond with Peter in verses 68-69, "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".

→ To Jesus alone be all the glory today and forever! Amen.