

Our Attitude Toward Jesus Determines Our Pentecost Joy.

Text: John 6:60-71

Suggested Hymns:
127, 128, 131, 134, 125

- 1) Unbelief will deprive us of Pentecost joy
- 2) Faith in Jesus as our Saviour will fill us with Pentecost joy

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 6:60-71, ⁶⁰ *Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"* ⁶¹ *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?"* ⁶² *"What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"* ⁶³ *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

⁶⁴ *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.* ⁶⁵ *And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."* ⁶⁶ *From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.* ⁶⁷ *Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"*

⁶⁸ *But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* ⁶⁹ *"Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* ⁷⁰ *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* ⁷¹ *He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Pentecost is a holy, happy festival. It is one of the two earliest festivals of the Church. Mention of its observance by the early Church

Fathers is not only frequent, but made in such a way as to show its wide and long-standing use. It is always pictured as a festival of joy.

Fasting and kneeling in prayer were forbidden, and all elements of joy were restored in the services and emphasised. You can see that joy, also in the Introit for today, **“Let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!”**

One of the reasons for this joy is also indicated in the Introit, **“The Spirit of the Lord has filled the world. Hallelujah!”** You heard the direct fulfilment of that in the Epistle read before where we have the inspiring story of the first Pentecost. What great and holy Pentecost joy must have filled the hearts of the Christians in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost Day when three thousand gladly received the Word and were baptised!

However, our Introit also gives the other side of the picture when it says, **“Let God arise; Let His enemies be scattered; Let them also that hate Him flee before Him.”** In their attitude to Jesus the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.

The person who is not filled with the Spirit of God and thus does not have the real Pentecost joy will show it by his attitude toward Jesus, just as Jesus tells us very directly in the Gospel for today, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; ...”*²⁴ *“He who does not love Me does not keep My words.”*¹

This is emphasised for us most dramatically in the text before us. This means that our attitude toward Jesus determines our Pentecost joy. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Unbelief Will Cause Us To Go Away From Jesus And Deprive Us Of Pentecost Joy

Our text has no direct connection with the first Pentecost celebration. This event occurred shortly after the death of John the Baptist, at the beginning of the last year of Jesus’ public ministry. Outwardly, it would seem, Jesus was at the height of His popularity, but unfortunately many of the people who flocked to Him did not recognise the true mission of Jesus.

In the beginning of this chapter from which our text is taken, John tells us of Jesus’ feeding the hungry five thousand on the desert mountainside. There many

of them had seen in Jesus what according to their tastes and desires they wanted Him to be. Their bellies were filled with bread and fish, which Jesus miraculously provided. That satisfied and pleased them and made them all the more eager to make Him their king. Jesus could then always provide whatever material need arose. Jesus saw their fleshly-mindedness and departed onto a mountain Himself alone.

But the people looked for Him and finally found Him on the other side of the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum. There Jesus met them and said, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you.”*** And with these words He began one of His most comforting sermons picturing Himself to them as the Bread of Life and extending to them the richness of His grace.

One would think that should have been a real Pentecostal festival of joy with these people whom He had so wondrously filled with bread for the body and who were now rejoicing and clinging to Him as the Bread of Life for their soul.

But listen to the first words of our text, ***“⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*** Instead of joy, dissatisfaction and offence were the result of Jesus’ gracious words. These people called it a hard saying, something too hard for them to believe or accept, namely, that Jesus should be the holy Son of God and that His flesh and blood could give them eternal life.

Although this dissatisfied grumbling went on softly, the omniscience of Jesus was fully aware of it. Our text tells us, ***“⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² “What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³ “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”***

With these words Jesus laid bare the whole problem of these people. They would not believe in Him as the Son of God because He looked like any other Jew. However, Jesus says that eventually His glory will be revealed, especially

when He returns to the glory of the Father where He dwelled before He became man.

He agrees that if He was only a man and had only human flesh, His claim to be the Bread of Life would be preposterous and do them no good. But He is also “spirit,” that is, God in essence and in truth. He is God and man in one person. This “spirit” also makes His Word “spirit and life,” *the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*²

Then Jesus tells them very frankly why they are offended. He says, ***“But there are some of you who do not believe,”*** and He enlarges upon that by adding, ***“Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”*** As the omniscient [all-knowing] God, Jesus had known from the day many of these had come to Him that it was not His Father’s persuasion, but materialistic motives which brought them to Him. Their carnal attitude stifled their faith, and Jesus had to tell them so.

This rebuke, which was administered in real love, however, did not open their hearts, but rather closed them all the more. John sadly reports in the text, ***“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”***

Not satisfied, but rather mortified by Jesus’ words, they left Him to follow the ways they knew before. If Jesus would not cater to their wishes, if He would not supply that carnal satisfaction which their fleshly minds desired, they would leave Him and see if He would not retract and seek to please them.

How modern that sounds in every way! People do that today. They want to go to church, and they desire to be members, but suddenly they are confronted with a public decision which will either reveal a humble faith in Jesus as the Saviour or an open rejection of Him for materialistic reasons.

They perhaps never have really believed in Jesus and thus never have received the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit, but it never became evident until a crisis is reached where they must plainly confess Jesus or turn away and walk no more with Jesus.

As sad as that church or pastor may feel that loses such people as members, and as much as all church members pray that everyone will remain faithful, it still

should not grieve us overmuch nor by any means cause us to compromise, because eventually the Saviour will reveal it.

Yet on this Pentecost Day may our prayers be all the more fervent that our faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour from sin fail not and that we might not thus lose our Pentecostal joy.

2. Faith In Jesus As God's Son And Our Saviour Will Fill Us With The Joy That God Wants Us To Have

As Jesus stands face to face with this painful revelation that so many of those who for a time had followed Him now went back and walked no more with Him, He turns to the Twelve with the straight-forward inquiry, ***“Do you also want to go away?”***

His words are partly a question, and partly an affirmation, and in the original would read like this, ***“Surely you do not want to go away also!”*** Impetuous Peter, always ready with an answer, replies immediately, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ “Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”***

Jesus did not direct this question to the disciples on His own account, as if He feared that He would be left entirely alone nor as if He did not know the attitude of the Twelve. It is for their sake that the question is put to them. He wants to draw them closer to Himself and thus increase their faith and joy in Him.

Peter's splendid confession rules out even the thought of anyone else. He asks in return, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go?”*** There is no choice for anyone who wants real joy and peace. No one can give what Jesus has. As Peter later declared so forcefully as he spoke to the court in Jerusalem, as we read in Acts 4:12, ¹² ***“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”***

Now Peter tells Jesus why they do not want to leave Him, ***You have the words of eternal life.*** He tells Jesus the same thing Jesus had said in the sermon on the Bread of Life. In this way Jesus had stated that His words were spirit and life. Jesus' words do not simply point out the way of life, but have as their essential content the life eternal. And to that Peter adds the firm statement, ***“Also***

we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In other words Peter is saying that he believes and is sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Thus Peter went to the very heart of the matter. He tells Jesus they know why they are following Him and why they want to cling to Him. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One of the Old Testament, the true Son of God, the Anointed Saviour of the world. Having really found Him, what more could one want or desire!

As Peter did here and also on that first Pentecost Day, so every sincere Christian, filled with the Holy Spirit, will confess Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour, even in the midst of apostasy and hostility all around him. It is at such times that the Holy Spirit will cause Christians to cling all the more closely to the Rock of their salvation, not in sentimental emotion, but in sound trust in Jesus’ Word, the Gospel of eternal life. And once one has gotten such firm conviction about Jesus, the Son of God, one has no intention nor desire to go away from Him.

However, Jesus also indicates to Peter that he cannot speak for all the Twelve. As much as it may seem that at least these Twelve are firmly convinced of Jesus’ Messiahship and will never leave Him, Jesus in His omniscience knows better.

He tells them all, *“Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* When Jesus said this, none of the Twelve, except possibly Judas himself, knew of whom He was speaking. ⁷¹ *[Jesus] spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.* How terrible! Judas with all his advantages never found Pentecost joy!

So close he was to Jesus physically, yet so far he went away spiritually. Could it happen to any of us present on this happy Pentecost Day? It could, but it must not. We need Jesus. Without Him, the Bread of Life, we will famish by the way. We will never reach the Father’s mansions, because only Jesus is *“the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*³

Now will you also go away? Remember there are only two ways to go, the well worn and smooth path to hell without Jesus or the rugged way to heaven with Him.

There will be only two sides on Judgment Day, the cursed and sorrowful on the left, or the happy and blessed on the right. There will be only two places in eternity, hell with all its terrible torture for those who went away from Jesus here on earth, or heaven with all its everlasting joys for those who believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

This Pentecost Day, then, is the day for us to pray⁴

Holy Spirit, strong and mighty,
Thou who makest all things new,
Make Thy work within me perfect,
And the evil foe subdue.
Grant me weapons for the strife,
And with victory crown my life.

In the faith, O make me steadfast;
Let not Satan, death, or shame
Of my confidence deprive me;
Lord, my refuge is Thy name.
When the flesh would doubt instil,
Let Thy Word prove stronger still. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 14:23-24

² Romans 1:16

³ John 14:6

⁴ Hymn 134 3 & 4