

DIRECT us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; in the Name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good morning! Good morning at home!

For many of us in the life of faith, there are these moments where we feel fully engaged, like we are being propelled by the Holy Ghost, all the angels, and everything else heaven can muster. These parts of our lives, if you've ever had the blessing of experiencing them, are like being on the hero side of an epic movie. When this happens, we know and feel that God is at our back, and everything that comes at us seems to melt away as He works His purposes in and through us. It's great, and I pray that everyone is graced with such a time of heightened joy and obvious growth with God sometime in their life and ministry.

But I think I'd be lying to you, my friends, if I told you the life of the Christian disciple, or even the expansion of Christian ministry as disciples together, is *always* like this. Many of you know another mode of Christian life, the one where we feel like we are just getting by with our spiritual lives, just barely hanging onto Christ's robe, desperately seeking for some of that great strength to jump into us while we amble through our crowded lives. In finally finishing our reading of St. John's sixth

chapter of his account of the Gospel, I can't help but read a similar feeling of hopeful desperation.

In what we read this morning, we read that Jesus had just completed some very difficult teachings, teachings that made implicit connections to the lawgiving ministry of Moses, essentially saying that his teachings were of greater authority, of greater eternal value. But even beyond his teaching, Jesus told his listeners that his very body and blood were food for eternal life. And as we talked about last week, there were folks who were following Jesus, even becoming his disciples, that were really turned off by where he was taking his ministry. What started with a great feeding, an attempted royal acclamation even, was ending for some (even as soon as in John's sixth chapter) in people abandoning Jesus; leaving aside his invitation for eternity. The tone has changed significantly by the end of the chapter, and careful readers or listeners can feel the shift from excitement to almost...loneliness.

Listen again to Peter as Jesus asked if his friends were ready to walk off. Peter 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."

Even as it is a clear, concise, beautiful recognition that Jesus has the teaching that leads to eternal life in God; even as it is an absolutely unequivocal confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the appointed and

anointed Holy One of God, Peter asked balefully where else he and his friends could go if not with Jesus. They know the truth, even if the teaching is hard. They would persevere, even though there's a feeling that what's ahead of them is not necessarily a bunch of free loaves and fishes.

The tension that we feel in this text, in the agony of abandonment along with the ecstasy of the truth of Christ's eternal glory, is part of John's brilliance as a Biblical writer and compiler of Jesus' teachings, stories, and traditions. John is, here in the sixth chapter, setting us up as readers to see a direct relationship between God's goodness and generosity clearly on display in Jesus, and humanity's brokenness run amok. I really think this episode prepares the reader for all manner of cool things we're about to see Jesus do throughout John's account even as it prepares the reader for all manner of very *uncool* things people will do in response to Jesus. Things like Judas' betrayal. Things like, Peter's threefold denial of Jesus (both of which happen in rapid succession in John 18, by the way).

But Peter, for his part, does remind us that the Son's words for eternity, are words that prepare us also to receive his resurrection to new life, and even prepare us for that truly beautiful moment later in John's book where Peter's three denials are met with Jesus' three commands that Peter feed Christ's sheep. Therefore, I think what we can count on in finishing John 6, and laying it over our lives with God, is that even as

there is great promise for God to do great things with Christ is among us, the work ahead is filled with challenges to that promise. Even still, despite all that we can muster and marshal against it, Jesus really is at our backs, really is redeeming life, time, and space, and is absolutely ready to answer Peter's question, "to whom can we go?" Beloved, if we were to ask the same, Christ would answer, "Come indeed to me and receive the Bread of Life."

And so, this week, maybe you're ready to take on the very gates of hell wherever God puts you. If that's where you are, put on the full armor of God like Paul says and get after it with God's help. The one to whom Peter confessed, the Holy One of God is with you. But maybe you've been roughed up a bit, and some of that armor is showing its wear. It's not coming off, by golly, but that pensiveness in Peter's address feels real today. Remember that:

The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them *
and delivers them from all their troubles.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted *
and will save those whose spirits are crushed.

Many are the troubles of the righteous, *
but the Lord will deliver him out of them all.

The one to whom Peter confessed, the Holy One of God is with you. And if you're somewhere in between, you can always help keep us all together when you, as Paul writes the Ephesians, "Pray in the Spirit at all times in

every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints." The Holy One of God is with all of us who would call on him for the words of Eternal Life.

To Him be all glory. From age to age. Amen.