

True and False Disciples, Part 2

Scripture: John 6:22-27

Code: 43-34

We have begun to look at the sixth chapter of John and we're going to do that again this morning. So open your Bible, if you will for the moment, to John chapter 6. We're going to take this chapter as one unit because I can't escape the fact that it appears that that's the intention of the Holy Spirit. I know it breaks down into many events, and a sermon at the heart of it, a great sermon on the bread of life that starts in verse 32. And it's an extended sermon. There are a number of different conversations that go on in this chapter, a couple of dramatic miracles that occur. And I suppose this chapter could be treated chunk-by-chunk almost as independent units. But it strikes me that this chapter really focuses on one very, very important issue and that is the difference between a true disciple and a false disciple, a true follower of Christ and a false follower of Christ, one who endures faithfully, and one who abandons, one who believes and in the end, one who does not believe. That's what we see here.

We started to take a look at that last week and it's critical for us to understand this reality . As I mentioned last week, I've been criticized through the years and most recently in response to the *Strange Fire* book, for calling into question the legitimacy of the salvation of those people who profess to be Christians. There are people who profess to be followers of Jesus, followers of Christ, who profess to be believers and maybe many who actually believe they are, but based upon what we learn from Scripture and what we eventually see in their lives, they turn out to be false disciples. Obviously people need to be warned about that because that's such a dire condition to be in, to be a false follower of Christ.

I don't know a place in the New Testament that focuses more specifically on that issue than this chapter. To get that from this chapter, you have to go to the end of the chapter. So turn to it for just a moment. Where does this chapter all kind of end? Because it is a unit, in fact chapter 6 starts with the words "After these things," meaning this is a break from chapter 5. But chapter 5 started that way, "After these things," which means that chapter 5 necessitates a break from chapter 4. So chapter 5 is a unit, chapter 6 is a unit, and we're going to see in chapter 7 verse 1, "After these things," again. These are indicators that we have passed out of one unit of instruction into another. The unit that we're looking at in chapter 6, this long chapter of 71 verses, really focuses on the difference between true and false disciples. And by the way, both in the chapter are called disciples. The word *mathetes* means follower, or student, or learner. So they were following Jesus ostensibly to learn from Him. But in the end, we see the distinction very clearly between the true and the false.

We could start in verse 60 just to get an idea of how it ends so we know where we're going. Many of His disciples, note that, they are called disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement, who can listen to it?" But Jesus conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before, it is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing, the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe," that is to say you do not believe the words that I have spoken to you, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying for this reason I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father. As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the Twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life? We have believed and have come to know that You are the holy One of God.'

You see the distinction between the disciples who did not believe and the disciples who did believe? The disciples who did not believe the claims that Jesus made, the words that Jesus spoke, and the disciples who did believe the claims that He made, the words that He spoke, "You and You alone have the words of eternal life." The false disciples for the very reason of His words, according to verse 65, as a result of His words, according to verse 66, withdrew. Both groups are called disciples. Both were followers of Jesus. Both were students listening to Him. Some were true, a small minority, and most were false. There actually is in the passage I just read you a prototype of a false disciple...a prototype. Go back to verse 64, "But **some of you who do not believe...**there are some of you who do not believe, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe," and here's the introduction of the prototype of a false disciples, "and who it was that would betray Him." The prototype of a false disciple is none other than Judas.

In verse 70, Jesus closes this chapter by saying, "Did I myself not choose you, the Twelve, and yet one of you is a devil? Now He meant Judas the son of Simon from the village of Kerioth outside Galilee, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray Him." The proto-typical false disciple, defector, apostate is Judas.

The story of Judas is shocking, tragic, maybe the ultimate of all human tragedies because of his proximity to Jesus for three years. There is a sense in which he is unique because there were only Twelve men who had that opportunity and eleven were believers, so there is a uniqueness to his apostasy.

But having said that, you will notice in verse 64 that he is just linked with non-believers. He is linked with those who reject Christ. In some ways Judas is absolutely unique. In other ways, he is no solitary figure, he is no solo monster, he is simply a prototype of a defecting follower of Jesus. He's one

among many...many, many, who follow Christ for a while and how abandon Jesus Christ, having had a full revelation of his person and his teaching. He is one of many.

So lest we think that hell has a special compartment only for Judas, we must remind ourselves that anyone having heard the truth, having known the truth, and walking away from the truth is in the category of Judas.

Our Lord knew this would happen. Our Lord Himself said that people would forsake Him very early in His ministry. He told parables. He gave accounts that illustrated this and He made even direct statements. For example, our Lord Himself said that people would forsake Him because they feared persecution. When persecution comes, they will defect and bear no fruit. Our Lord said that there were people who would hear and be attracted and follow for a little while but the deceitfulness of riches, the love of money would pull them away. He said there are others who would be lured and seduced by the love of the world system and it would cause them to defect. He said on other occasions that there were people who would follow for a little while or start to follow, and they would abandon Him because they wanted comfort and ease...like the disciple who wanted to make sure he went home before he followed and collected all the money that was coming to him. There were other who defected from Jesus because they were unwilling to sever relationships with family, people close to them.

This is the complex of reasons why people walk away from Christ. But they're not in play here in this chapter. This chapter is more direct. The defectors in this case defected because of what He said. It wasn't about relationships. It wasn't about the world. It wasn't about riches. It wasn't about comfort. It wasn't about avoiding persecution, all those...although those things probably would have driven them away. On this occasion it was His words that drove them out. Verse 65, "He was saying, 'For this reason,' verse 66, 'as a result of this,' what is that referring to? His words. Verse 63, "The words that I have spoken to you, they are spirit and they are life." It was His teaching.

And the words He's referring to are the words in that great sermon on the bread of life that starts in verse 32 and runs all the way down to verse 60 almost. And in that great sermon, He talked about His death and His resurrection. He told them, "You have to believe in My death."

He also condemned their false religion and their works/righteousness. It was the condemnation of their religion and the declaration of His own death that they resented. The gospel offended them, even though He hadn't died yet. He proclaimed that He would die and they would of necessity believe in that if they were to be saved. That message was the same as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1, it was a stumbling block to the Jews...a stumbling block. A Messiah who is dead? A bloodied Messiah? He even spoke of drinking His blood.

The powerful declaration that Jesus makes about the necessity of believing in Him as the Holy One of God, but also in His death and subsequent resurrection and the absolute necessity to abandon their religious system of Judaism, salvation by works, triggered their defection that day in the synagogue of Capernaum where He had given that message.

So, for many reasons, people abandoned Jesus. On this case, it was His words. And inevitably, eventually it comes down to that. These Jews were warned, they were warned. Believe and you'll have life. Reject and you'll be condemned. And the vast majority of them apparently rejected. They were retreating from the gospel back into the satisfaction they found in the externalism of their corrupt form of Judaistic religion. They weren't becoming Agnostics, they were becoming Atheists, they were just going back to their religion the point of their comfort.

This is typical behavior for Jewish people in the New Testament times. To illustrate that to you, I want you to turn to Hebrews 3...Hebrews 3. Hebrews, obviously, written to Jews, this is written to a church, a gathering of Jewish believers, and they are addressed and referred to throughout this entire letter, Jewish believers. But also in that church were Jews who were looking at the gospel, looking at Christianity. They were interested. They understood it intellectually. They had been exposed to it. They had first-hand eyewitness testimony to the signs and wonders and miracles, the affirmation of the truth concerning Christ and the gospel. These Jews are there but they're not committed. They're sort of hanging in the balance. And so throughout the book of Hebrews, there are severe warnings to them. Like in chapter 2, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" All the way through to the end of the epistle these warnings keep being repeated and repeated and repeated and repeated.

One of them, and I think it's very instructive, is essentially an exposition of Psalm 95 found in Hebrews 3. And we can't cover all of it, but look at Hebrews 3 for a moment. The true believers in the congregation are addressed in verse 1 as holy brethren. When you see holy brethren, He's talking about believers. Down in verse 12 you see, "Take care, brethren," and there He's talking about Jews, Jewish brothers and sisters.

So what is His message to these Jews who were there and hearing the gospel but not committing to Christ? Go to verse 6. "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house." That's His church. "Whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end." If you abide, if you remain, if you stay, you demonstrate that you are part of the house over which Christ rules. It's about enduring, being faithful to the end.

This then is a statement of fact. You're a true follower of Christ if you're faithful to the very end. Some of you are not. And so starting in verse 7 there's a quote from Psalm 95, verses 7 to 11, "Therefore just as the Holy Spirit says in Psalm 95, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me as in the day of trial in the wilderness where your fathers tried Me by testing

Me and saw My works for 40 years, therefore I was angry with this generation and said they always go astray in their heart and they did not know My ways as I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”

That takes us back to Exodus 16, doesn't it? Back to the book of Exodus, rather. Back to the failure of the children of Israel to come to a true faith in God and therefore a whole generation died in the wilderness. Don't be like that. don't be like that generation that perished in the wilderness, never entered the promised land, never entered Canaan. They all died in the wilderness. They died in unbelief, never entered the promised land. That's an illustration of what's going to happen to you, not in a temporal sense of entering a promised land, but in the sense of entering heaven and the Kingdom of God. You don't want that to happen.

So verse 12 He says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” That's the whole point. An evil, unbelieving heart...He's warning the Jews who are reading this letter and all who will ever read this letter who are sitting on the fence, don't let a hard heart, an unbelieving heart cause you to fall away from the living God. Hebrews 6 warning says, “If with full revelation you fall away, it's impossible to be renewed again to repentance.”

This is so serious, verse 13 adds, “Encourage one another day after day as long as it is still called today so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. He says to this believing congregation, “Not only do you as individuals want to be warned, but you as a church, you collectively need to encourage these people to come to faith and not harden their hearts. And verse 14, back to the principle, we have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance, firm until the end. It's the people who stay faithful to the end, if you continue in My word, John 8, you're My real disciple. Again the warning from Psalm 95 in verse 15, “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart as when they provoked Me.”

The result, verse 18, “To whom did He swear that day that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient.” So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Chapter 4 carries the same message. Verse 1, “Let us fear if while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to come short of it.” This goes on all the way through the fourth chapter, warning after warning, don't harden your heart, don't harden your heart. You see it all the way down into verse 7...come all the way to faith. Verse 11 sums it up, “Let us be diligent to enter that rest, salvation rest, so that no one will fall through following the same example of disobedience, the example of those who fell in the wilderness.”

Now I'm just pointing out this principle existed in the early church in this Jewish congregation, of people sitting on the edge and not being true followers of Jesus Christ. It still exists today and it will exist all the way to the final judgment because in that day, referring to that final judgment, many will

say, “Lord, Lord,” and I will say, “Depart from Me, I never knew you.” False discipleship was a problem in the time of Jesus, it was a problem in the time of the Apostles writing the epistles. It’s been a problem through all of church history. It will show up at the judgment as a very serious problem in that day.

All that to take us back to John 6, because you need that kind of context to really see the depths of this section. What took place that day in John 6 in the synagogue, when those people walked away, turned their backs, was not some kind of unusual event. Their spiritual defection is a pattern that has gone on through the history of the church, even in the early church. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.”

It’s easy to condemn someone, as I have been condemned through the years for questioning the legitimacy of people’s salvation. But the Bible warns over and over of the importance of not being deceived about your spiritual condition. “The way is narrow, few there be that find it. The way is broad, many there be who go in that way.” These kinds of warnings are critical and important.

So we have an extensive history of false discipleship throughout the history of the church and you recognize some of it even today. It’s all around us in the name of Christianity, false believers. And generally speaking, I think it’s fair to say very often they are driven away by the truth...they’re driven away by the truth. The message, like they were in Capernaum, the gospel is an offense to them, it is a stumbling block, it is foolishness. And so, when the message comes out, then there’s an opportunity to discern between the true and the false.

In the situation in John 6, let me just kind of rehearse very quickly, false disciples have collected around Jesus and what has attracted them? Let me give you the little list that we worked on last time. False disciples are attracted by the crowd. There’s a dynamic in the crowd, there’s an electricity in the crowd, we see that in verses 1 and 2 as the chapter begins. The crowd collects around Jesus because of His miracles of healing. It’s very dangerous when Jesus is popular, very dangerous when Jesus is popular in drawing huge crowds, crowds attract more people, crowds become magnetic themselves and they attract people who don’t even know why they’re joining the crowd.

False disciples are attracted by crowds, create crowds and very often you will attract false disciples. Secondly, we learned that false disciples are fascinated by the supernatural. These crowds came together because of the prospect and the promise that there would be the miraculous, there would be the supernatural. They were trying to get above the mundane outside the routine things of life and promises were being made and delivered on by Jesus, obviously. People said He could heal and cast out demons, and He did. And it was the prospect and the promise of the supernatural that drew the crowd. That still works even when the people who promised it can’t deliver it. People are that desperate and they’re that attracted to something that might be supernatural.

Thirdly, we saw false disciples think only of earthly benefits. Immediately after the miracle of the feeding twenty to twenty-five thousand people, miraculously creating food, you remember that they tried to take Jesus and force Him to become King. Verse 15, they wanted to make Him a King by force. They saw Him as the one that they would literally push into the role of Messiah and Deliverer.

It was not about spiritual reality. It was not about salvation. Their long-cherished messianic idea was that the Messiah would be a Deliverer, a temporal, physical deliverer, that He would create well-being, that He would bring in the rich promises to David and Abraham of a flourishing prosperous nation, void of difficulty and without enemies in their midst.

So carnal enthusiasm for worldly things, they wanted freedom and fulfillment and satisfaction on an earthly level. The shallow follower has no interest in the eternal, no interest in the heavenly, no interest in the spiritual, no interest in the theological, not interested in matters of sin and righteousness and repentance and holiness and true love of God.

So what do you do when you want to attract the false disciples? Your church has diet programs. That will attract false disciples cause they're interested in the temporal. By the way, one of the bestselling Christian books is a diet plan. Nothing wrong with a diet, but if that's what the church offers, then that's how the church collects false disciples. People are looking for temporal solutions.

That was Judas really. Judas was one of the Twelve because he wanted to be in on the benefits of the Kingdom. And when he began to see that Jesus was going to die, he tried to get out with as much money as he could get. And the money burned in his hands and in his soul, created so much guilt, committed suicide. But he was driven the whole time by the love of money and prestige and power and elevation in a worldly sense.

If you draw...you draw false disciples with a crowd., you draw them with the promise of the experience of the supernatural, you draw them when you promise temporal temporary benefits. That's what attracts false disciples.

And, fourthly, false disciples have no interest in worship. They have no desire for worship. You remember I told you last time we went through verses 16 to 21, Jesus walked on water, remember the account? He walked on water and in Matthew 14, you have to compare Matthew and Mark's account and John's account, they saw Jesus walking on the water, you remember the statements the disciples made? "Truly this is the Son of God, and they worshiped Him."

True disciples are worshipers of Christ. It's all about Christ. They're true worshipers as they are identified in John 4, true worshipers...true worshipers. They're like Thomas who said, "My Lord and my God."

But the false disciples, there's no humility there, there's no meekness there. There's no adoring reverence. There's no holy awe. They come for the external. They come for the show. They come for the promise, the hope of some temporal fulfillment. There's no real obedience. There's no longing for the glory and honor of God and the exaltation of Christ. So that's where we drew it to a close last time. False disciples are drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the promise of a spiritual experience, desires of earthly satisfaction, and void of any interest in real worship. They'll watch a show and listen to music, but that's a far cry from real worship.

That brings us down to where we are and we have about ten minutes. But that's okay because this is a short incident. False disciples seek personal prosperity. And this is a nuance on what we've been saying but it's helpful to see it this way. False disciples seek personal prosperity. The one thing you don't want to do is offer them what they already seek in their unregenerate condition. But people do it all the time today.

Let's pick it up then in verse 22. "The next day," that's the day after the feeding of the twenty to twenty-five thousand, "the crowd stood on the other side of the sea." They're still there. They're still on the eastern side. You remember all this happened on the eastern side of the lake of Galilee. They're still on the eastern shore. Why are they there? Cause they've been there all night. Why have they been there all night? Why didn't they go anywhere? It's very simple. The reason they're still there on the other side is that there was no other small boat there except one and Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat but His disciples had gone away alone. You remember how the day ended? Jesus fed everybody, and then He told the disciples to go. Remember? They all got in the boat and they left and Jesus wasn't in the boat. So they know that. The crowd knows Jesus didn't leave. That's why they stayed there all night. As good as the meal was, they're going to need breakfast. I mean, that's how they thought. They didn't go anywhere. But when the morning came, He was not there. And even more people were there because verse 23 says, "There came other small boats from Tiberias," that means from the western shore across the lake and they came near where they ate the bread and the Lord had given thanks. So they came back to the very location of the miracle. The word had gone around the lake, or across the lake after the storm if they actually crossed the lake, cause there was a storm and Jesus stilled it and the word got to Tiberias and by morning little boats are coming.

These people lived for food, do you understand? I mean, the battle for bread was the battle for bread. You don't have a battle for bread, you go to the market. You don't have a battle for bread, you go to the fast-food thing. Your battle is to see if you can get it in five minutes. You don't know what it is to struggle to get your next meal. But that was life. And this is the ultimate, ultimate hope for people, not having to worry about the next meal. So here come little boats from Tiberias to the location because the word has gone around the lake overnight and the place is full of more people and they're all there. In verse 24, "When the crowd saw that Jesus wasn't there, nor His disciples, they knew they were in

the wrong place. Jesus isn't there. We're not getting any food. So they got into the small boats. I think those people got back in their boats and took other people with them so you had a sort of a flotilla of water taxis headed back to Capernaum because they knew that was where Jesus had established His headquarters and that's in Matthew chapter 4 verse 13. It says, "Jesus established Himself in the town of Capernaum." He couldn't go back to Nazareth, as you know.

So they head for Capernaum. Now this is a...this is a huge crowd, you understand? The twenty thousand or whatever that was there last night, they've slept well because their stomachs were full, awaking in the morning hoping for the same thing to be repeated and to take Him by force again and make Him a King. And they still have that in their minds. They get up, He's not there and the crowd has been multiplied because all the boat people have come over. And now they realize He's not there so they all head for where they know His headquarters is and that's Capernaum. And they get there in verse 25, and they find Him on the other side of the sea at Capernaum and they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here? When did You get here?" And that implies, "How did You get here?"

He never answers the question. He ignores it. He doesn't say I walked not on land but water. I walked out to the middle of the lake, met the disciples, and had a little incident with Peter, got him dried off, back in the boat. And immediately another miracle occurred and we were at shore. Docked the boat, came...He doesn't do that.

You say, "Well, wouldn't that have convinced them of something?" No. They had just been involved in a miracle as participants and they didn't believe in who He was. What were they back for? What was their interest? Verse 26, "Jesus answered them," and this is what He said to them, ignoring the question, "Truly, truly," again amen, amen, this is repeated throughout John to emphasize really critical statements that our Lord makes. They're sort of universal truisms. "I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw signs," meaning not because what you saw in the miraculous feeding and healing that went on and that you've seen day after day has driven you to acknowledge who I am, like the disciples who said truly He is the Son of God, the Holy One of God. You're not here because you followed the signs that pointed to Me as Savior and Messiah and Lord. But because you ate the loaves, or the crackers and were filled, foddered up, *chortazo*, it's a word used for animals. These are the first candidates for the prosperity gospel, for the social gospel. Jesus wants to feed you. Jesus wants to fulfill your desires. They're...they're seekers of personal fulfillment, to have their personal needs met. They wanted their desires met on the spot by Jesus. They wanted Jesus to give them whatever they wanted.

That's still going on and Jesus is still being offered by false teachers as the genie who gives you what you want. But that's a misrepresentation of Him as makes...as He makes clear in verse 27, this is where we'll stop, verse 27, "Do not work for the food which perishes." You're pursuing completely the wrong thing. Anything that is temporal, temporary, superficial, physical, earthly—do not work, don't spend your energy and your effort and your money and your time for what perishes. But for the food

which endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give to you for on Him the Father God has set His seal.”

That is just a profoundly important verse. Stop seeking what perishes. The wood, hay, stubble, but seek the food which endures to eternal life. What is the food that endures to eternal life? It's Him. It's Him. "I am the bread of life," he says in verse 35, "he who comes to Me will not hunger and he who believes in Me will never thirst." Verse 41, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." It's Him. He is the one whom the Father has sealed, what does that mean? Authenticated. And that was Peter's message, you remember, on the Day of Pentecost when He stood up in Jerusalem and said, "Men of Israel, listen to these words, Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs." God put His seal authenticating Christ by empowering Him to do the miracles, wonders and signs. So Jesus says, "You ignore the signs and what they point to and what they demonstrate and you come for crackers. Stop working for what perishes and work for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give." And what is it that He will give? He says later in that great sermon, "I give My flesh, I give My flesh...verse 51...I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh. Believe in Me, in who I am and why I came and that I came to die. Believe the gospel." That endures to eternal life.

You can always get a crowd to get their needs met, get their desires fulfilled, to have some hope that their ambitions will be realized. But that is never what Jesus offers...never. What you will do when you do that is you will just collect false disciples, drawn by the crowd, fascinated by the prospect of the supernatural, thinking only of earthly things with no real desire for worship although they'll watch the show and like the music, caught up with trying to fulfill their own personal satisfactions, but with no interest in the bread of life. Eventually when you preach that message, they go away.

Now that's only about half of the principles in this pathology of false disciples. I'll start next Sunday with the next one, false disciples make demands on God...they make demands on God. They think they should control Him, a very popular thing these days. Let's pray.

We've been so profoundly exhilarated and blessed this morning, Lord, in just listening to the great music and knowing that so much of it came right out of Scripture, we have been bathed in divine revelation set to music. So enriching, such a blessing. Thank You for it. And we've been reminded again from Your Word how important it is to be a true disciple, a real disciple, a genuine follower of Christ who endures to the end. Not just drawn by the crowd, not just fascinated by the experience that might be supernatural, not seeking earthly benefits, not looking for personal fulfillment, but really coming like those disciples on the water, to confess that we know who You are, the Holy One of God and to bow down and worship. May we be true worshipers. May it be that our faith is truly in Christ, not in what He might give us to make this life better, but what He has already given us to satisfy us everlastingly in the life to come. Lord, open up hearts to the truth and may we examine ourselves to

see if we really know Christ. Is it Christ we seek? Is it Him, the bread, who satisfies the soul?

Lord, again we can only open the Word and take a look at it as meager as our efforts are, we know that it's alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder soul and spirit, and opening the thoughts and intents of the heart, and there's nothing hidden from it. So we ask, Lord, that You would do Your work through Your Word and through Your Spirit to penetrate every heart and may there be no deception or confusion about our spiritual condition. May we know that we are in Christ, feeding on the bread of life without doubt and we know that confirmation comes when that reality exists.

For those who have not embraced Christ, may Your Spirit give them life even now, may the Father draw them to Himself. These things we ask for Your glory. Amen.

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