

## Words of Life, Words of Death, Part 2

Scripture Reading: Psalm 73:1-28 (p. 820)

Text: John 6:65-71

There is much trouble that is coming worldwide; many signs are pointing in that direction: famine, political unrest, wars, financial hardship due to increases in the cost of food, energy and housing. People's hopes and dreams they worked hard to make reality will come to a stretching halt. There is going to be a new pandemic; or so we will be told. **Then**, the whole AI technology that will take over many jobs as it has already begun to do; not to mention, our computers, cell phones and other electronic devices will become obsolete as people embrace brain chip technology not knowing that they will be giving themselves over to a very demonic system to control what they think; what they can and cannot do. **In essence**, they will have given themselves over to a "**Technocracy**" to serve a beast system.

It will not just be a time of Tribulation for the wicked; it will be a time of purging, where in a sense, there will a separating of true Christians, **born of the Spirit**; and who those are only assenting to its teachings as they benefit from them in this world. Biblical Christianity will be tested to the max and those who profess faith in Jesus Christ will be required to follow the world and hang on to their dreams and hopes or follow Jesus and lose everything. **There will be no in-between**. They will either put their trust in Jesus Christ and the promises revealed in Scripture without compromise;

or, follow what is demanded of them by an evil political and social system and/or person. They will either submit to the words of life found in Scripture alone or follow the words of death, including following after what preachers and teachers say what Scripture says without testing their teachings against what Scripture actually says; interpreting Scripture with Scripture. Just as in our text in the Gospel of John, will you follow after what you have been taught all your life or follow what Jesus has said, as reveled in God's holy Word, the Bible? Sadly, many people will jump ship from Biblical Faith to maintain a worldly lifestyle that offers a temporary sense of comfort and security, but in the end will only lead to death; everlasting death as they hear the words of Jesus Christ as words of death rather than sweet smelling words of life that bring salvation and everlasting life through Jesus Christ alone.

**But what does the worldwide troubles that are coming have to do with our text for today?** Simply this, as I alluded to a moment ago, there were many people, who, after hearing Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life, found it too difficult to deal with so they decided to jump ship; to turn back from following Jesus, because they could not understand that Jesus was using figurative language to teach the people about the life that is found in Him and Him crucified and resurrected. **Rather than understanding Jesus' sweet smelling words as words of life, they considered Jesus' words, words of death.** In their minds, when they heard Jesus' words, it was as if the world had tumbling down around them and all hope was lost of what was supposed to be, according to what they

were taught by the Scribes and Pharisees. It was, to them, the end of their hope of Jesus being the Messiah, the One who would deliver them from Roman rule, and restore Israel to its glorious prominence, as in the days of King David and King Solomon; an earthly kingdom that would rule over the rest of the world.

Even some of His followers, who considered themselves His disciples, that had followed Jesus for many months and over many miles hearing His teachings and witnessing His miracles, including His most recent miracle of feeding 5,000 men, plus women and children, did not believe that the words He spoke were words of life. **Like the Galilean religious leaders, they could not understand Jesus' figurative 'saying' that spoke of far deeper truths than what seemed on the surface, as Jesus explained in verse 63.** Jesus clearly stated they were words of spirit and life to all who received them by faith, understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who gives life, not the flesh; that is, not eating and drinking of Jesus' physical flesh and blood.

**However,** Jesus knew that they would soon desert Him, because according to His divine nature, He knows all things, including those who believe and those who will not believe in Him. **In verse 64,** He told them flat out that some of those who were called His disciples did not believe, which is where we left off last week.

**Today,** we will finish up with the rejection of Jesus by some of those who had been following Him for a while **in verses 65 and 66;** and then we will

consider what happened with the twelve disciples that He specially selected for His earthly ministry **in verses 67 to 71.**

**In verse 65,** we read what Jesus says to the mass of followers, **“And He said, ‘Therefore I have said unto you that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father.’”** **Here,** Jesus reminds the disciples as to why they did not believe in Him; the Father had not granted them faith to believe. **Or,** as Jesus said in verses 44 and 45, the Father did not draw them to Him, teaching their heart what Jesus meant in His discourse and granting them the faith to believe that the words He spoke were words of life. The Father did not give them the grace and the strength to come to Jesus in true faith; He did not give them a heart to come, because without that strength, without that faith given to them, they would never come to Him; in fact, in their unregenerate fallen nature, they cannot come to Him, according to Romans 8:7. Calvin aptly says it this way, **“What we obtain by the gift and grace of God, no man procures for himself by his own industry.”**

Since we have covered this truth in previous messages I don’t want to spent much time on what Jesus says here, except to mention that James, in his epistle captures the truth that Jesus is telling His disciples in this 65<sup>th</sup> verse of John Chapter 6. In James Chapter 1, verses 17 and 18, we read, **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the**

**word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."** **Those who have been granted to come to Jesus have been born anew by the word of truth,** made alive by the word of life by the Father through the mighty regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, making sinners alive from being dead in trespasses and sins, opening their eyes of understanding, as He removes the veil of darkness so that the light of Gospel shines unhindered upon and in their hearts (Deuteronomy 18:4; Romans 12:1-12; Revelation 12:1-2).

**Not only did Jesus' discourse about the Bread of Life cause unbelief,** but now Jesus is telling them that He is not surprised at their unbelief, because He knew from the very beginning that His Father had not granted them to come to Him, to believe in Him, and His true mission of the self-sacrifice of His flesh on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and by His resurrection life everlasting.

It was with these words in verse 65 coupled with their inability to understand His discourse concerning the Bread of Life that were the deciding factors for many of His follower to stop following after Him. **Verse 66 tells us, "From that *time* many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."** The word "**time**" is not in the original, and the word translated "**that**" is better rendered, "**this**," and as such the word "**this**" could refer to Jesus' teaching concerning the Bread of Life, and more closely to what He just told them concerning knowing about their lack of faith, **and that** because the Father had not granted it to them. The Revised

Standard Version gives a better sense of the original Greek, rendering it **"After this,"** and it seems to make better sense. Though referencing time in the King James does not detract significantly from the account, because the reason for their departure is clear from the context of the passage, but Jesus' last comment seemed to be the last straw or deciding factor for many of the mass of disciples or followers to depart from Jesus and **"walked with Him no more;"** and this seems to be the emphasis here, the words Jesus just spoke are what gave rise to their departure.

**Let's note,** the departure of some of His disciples was not some temporary lapse of faith; it was a permanent rejection of Christ; they **"walked with Him no more."**

We noted previously that many who had heard Jesus' message could be described as **"the roadway"** in the parable of the Sower and the seed recorded in Matthew 13, where the seed of the gospel message landed on the hardened roadway and was quickly taken away by the devil, which signified that Christ and His messages were rejected without further consideration. **Now,** we see many of the multitude of so-called disciples who, after following Jesus for a time, are now forsaking Him, rejecting Him and His message. These disciples could be viewed as the **"rocky soil"** in that parable, where the seed lands on the rocky soil, quickly springs up, but when the heat of the day comes, **it quickly withers.** Many of Jesus' disciples were quick to follow Him for a while, but are now quickly departing from Him under the heat of the testing with truth being spoken;

it was evidence of how shallow their roots were, or rather their faith in Jesus Christ.

John writes in his first epistle concerning those who depart from the faith after professing faith in Jesus Christ, describing their apostasy this way, **"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us"** (1 John 2:19). The many so-called disciples who went back from following Jesus in our text in the Gospel of John, made themselves known to have never been true disciples of Jesus. **Moreover**, with John's added note in our text that many of His disciples never walked with Jesus again, it is evident that their apostasy was final.

**For them**, salvation is no longer possible, as we read in Hebrews Chapter 6, beginning with verse 4, **"For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *Him* to an open shame"** (vs. 4-6). There would be no room for repentance for the disciples who rejected Jesus, who refused to believe in Him, rejecting Him and His message. **Indeed**, they would not have the desire to repent and follow

Him once again, because they did not belong to Jesus, the Father having not given them to Him so that He might give them everlasting life.

**Their hope for a Messiah to rule over them in Jerusalem and deliver them from the Roman Empire just got crushed; and so, the multitude of followers turned away from Jesus Christ.** It was truly a sad moment in the earthly ministry of Jesus, not only did the religious leaders reject Jesus; but also the multitude of people who considered themselves Jesus' disciples drew back from Him. **But what of His chosen twelve disciples?** Will they follow the crowd, panic in the midst of the mass departure of many others? Will they also reject Him? **Were the words of life that Jesus spoke, words of death to them, also?** This leads us to verse 67.

**In verse 67,** after many of His followers had left, Jesus turns to His twelve disciples and asks, **"Will ye also go away?"** In the original language the structure of this question is such that Jesus expected a negative answer. It is as though He was asking, **"Do you really want to remain My followers?" "Have you fully made up your minds to remain with Me, regardless of the fact many others have left Me, including many of those who were considered My disciples?"**

What Jesus sought was not so much for His comfort and benefit, for He already knew the answer to the question. **The question posed to the twelve disciples was for their benefit, that they may be certain in**

**their heart and mind as to whether they wanted to stay with Him, or whether they desired to leave Him, like many of His other followers.** We also learn from His question that faith in Him is not by compulsion, faith is not forced upon a person, even His chosen people; on the contrary, faith is to be affirmed and confirmed willingly and with heartfelt conviction that Jesus is the only true Messiah, the only true Savior, who alone saves all who rest in Him and the redemption purchased for him or her and no other, even if it means that he or she stands alone in the face of opposition and mass desertion of the faith. Calvin puts it this way, **“ . . . if faith be founded on Christ, it will not depend on men, and will never waver, though it should see heaven and earth mingling.”** When all others are leaving the faith, will you leave it also? Will you forsake and leave Jesus Christ, abandon the truths He has revealed in His word to embrace the opinions of the masses, or the culture of our day, to follow the masses? **Or will you stand firm, affirming your faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Him raised again, when you are tested or challenged?**

If the Father had not drawn the twelve disciples to Jesus they also would have chosen to depart, along with many of His other followers. **However,** because they were given to Jesus, who, with the exception of Judas, the Holy Spirit taught them the truths that Jesus was speaking; **therefore,** they were able to see, or rather understand the spiritual truths, of which Jesus spoke. They were words of life, which Peter expresses on behalf of all twelve disciples in verses 68 and 69, where he said, **“Lord, to whom shall we go?**

**Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."** The twelve disciples talked amongst themselves to decide whether they would continue to follow Jesus in light of His most recent message on the Bread of Life. They asked themselves, "**Shall we give our hearts and mind to the world?** It will certainly deceive us. **Shall we return to sin?** It will certainly destroy us. **Shall we leave the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns?**" So it was, they concluded in their hearts that there would be no one else to whom they could go who would have true words of everlasting life.

In our Scripture Reading this morning from Psalm 73, we learn of the palmist's struggle with envying the ungodly, who, with a contrite and broken heart, realized his sin and by faith declared in verse 25, contrary to what others were doing and saying, "**Whom have I in heaven *but Thee?* And *there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*" In opposition to the many who responded unfavorably to Jesus and left Him, Peter, in like fashion as the Psalmist, affirms the faith of the twelve disciples, as though He had said to Jesus, "**Whom have we in heaven, but Thee? And there is none upon earth that we desire beside Thee.**"**

Not only did Peter declare that Jesus was the only one who had the words of everlasting life, he went on to declare that their faith was not based on blind, or ignorant belief, but grounded in the solid knowledge that Jesus was most assuredly the Promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, as

recorded in verse 69 of our text in John Chapter 6. **It is a faith that is distinguished from all other religions of the world, which are based upon erroneous and false opinions of men.** It is a faith with the knowledge of the truths, of the doctrines that are revealed to us through no other source than the Bible. The Muslims, those claiming to be Jews, the Roman Catholics, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the New Agers, the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and any other religion of the world neither know nor understand any thing, except the opinions of their leaders, and the inventions of their hearts' evil and rebellious imagination. Not so of true Christianity. Calvin expresses this thought well, when he writes, "**Knowledge is connected with faith, because we are certain and fully convinced of the truth of God, not in the same manner as human sciences are learned, but when the Spirit seals it on our hearts.**"

Notwithstanding, when Peter spoke on behalf of the twelve disciples, he did not know there was one in the midst of them who would betray Jesus, as recorded in verses 70 and 71 of our text. In these verses Jesus reveals to the twelve that He knew there would be one of them who would betray Him, and then in verse 71 John notes who the betrayer of Jesus is, **Judas Iscariot.**

There is much that can be said about these two verses concerning Judas, but I would like to highlight one item that expresses well Jesus' thought concerning Judas. In verse 70, we read that Jesus pulls no punches when He describes Judas, as "**a devil.**" **Satan is a liar, a false accuser, so also Judas.** Judas is said to be not just influenced by Satan; but according to

John Chapter 13, verses 2 & 27, Satan entered his heart, and filled it, thereby took possession of it to do Satan's bidding; Satan's work of betrayal through Judas. **Satan is a fallen angel**, so also Judas, a fallen disciple that was among the ranks of Jesus' inner circle of specially selected disciples; **indeed**, he was one the twelve apostles, personally chosen by Jesus to be a messenger of the kingdom of God, and yet, he was a betrayer, a devil.

Hendricksen describes well the significance of Judas' character, as a devil in light of the context of this passage in John. He writes of Judas, "**His devilish character appears especially from this fact that while others, ever so many of them, had deserted the Lord when they felt that they could not agree with him and when they rebelled against the spiritual character of his teaching, this one individual remained with him, as if he were in full accord with Jesus.**"

Yet, Jesus was not deceived by his feigned agreement, his false profession of faith. While the other eleven disciples were deceived by the fake faith of Judas, even surprised when he was revealed to them; **Jesus was not surprised**, because He knew from the very beginning who Judas was and his role as the son of perdition, in the redemptive plan of God, as Jesus stated in His high priestly prayer recorded in John Chapter 17, verse 12; **and**, as Peter recounts in Acts Chapter One, verses 16-19.

**However**, Judas was not the only one who is a betrayer of Jesus. There were many who came after Judas who had betrayed Jesus, who had

betrayed the faith with false doctrine, rejecting the truths taught in Scripture, rejecting the cross of Christ as their only ground for salvation, the forgiveness of sins. **In the New Testament time,** many had risen up in the midst of the church; wolves in sheep clothing as Jesus says in Matthew 7:15, who would even serve as elders, preachers and teachers in the church; Jude, calls them, **"clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; <sup>13</sup> raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."**

**So also,** just as in the New Testament times, there are many Judas' today, who are deceiving those who are weak in the faith, who say they are followers of Jesus Christ, but in their heart they are devils, full of rebellion and hatred toward God, claiming to love men who practice all sorts of sin and wickedness, encouraging them in their sinful practices, even ordaining them as ministers to the people of their denomination, teaching them their wicked ways as being normal alternative lifestyles, normalizing sexual perversion in whatever form that may be expressed, while rejecting the truths clearly revealed in Scripture, and railing against those who preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are also those who have deceived many, ensnaring many who claim the name of Jesus Christ; yet, have become idol worshippers through the so-called **"Christian Nationalism"** movement, lifting up a man as the one who will save their nation and even the world; **yet,** the man has proven himself to be at the very least an antichrist and betrayer of their trust;

**notwithstanding**, the deception is great, as the great deceiver feeds their delusions of patriotism, which is nothing more than idolatry.

**Beloved in Christ, do not be deceived**, those churches that have embraced modern opinions concerning the faith have forsaken Jesus Christ. Though they cry with loud voices saying they love Him, their hatred for Him is evident in their denial of Him, as they practice all sorts of sins permitting drunkenness, adultery, sexual immorality, and homosexuality; **not to also mention**, hanging on to a false hope of peace and prosperity in this fallen world. **What an abomination and reproach to the Lord!** Their hatred is obviously great; yet, cunningly disguised behind a watered-down gospel, a man-centered gospel, which is no gospel at all and all who hold that gospel are “**accursed**,” as we are told in Galatians 1:8-9.

**Beloved in the Lord**, do not follow after those who say they love God, love Jesus, but in their actions, they speak venomous hate and rebellion against Him and His word, seeking to establish an earthly kingdom of God through man-centered agendas; worldly policies that work to deceive the sheep who put their trust in cunningly devised words, which lead only to destruction and death, everlasting death.

**Let us each ask ourselves who we are.** Are we the ones who when tested and challenged in our faith, reject the teaching of the word, and go away, like many of Jesus’ disciples did in the passage before us today?

**Will we sell out to our culture?** Will we sell out to some other religion? Will we join the panic departure or apostasy of the faith when under the duress or oppression and persecution, or things don’t go the way we think they should or don’t go the way we were taught all our lives, and embrace

the worldly promises of a social or political gospel? **Will we profess to be believers, like Judas, and be a betrayer of Jesus, sticking around for our own personal gain, professing faith in Christ, but in our heart rejecting Him, and His teaching; pursuing your own agenda?** Or, will you stand firm in the midst of the mass desertion of the faith by others, who seek to have their ears tickled; who when faced with truth, will reject it and thus reject Jesus Christ because it doesn't fit into the opinions of others, or the culture of our day?

**May God,** by His grace, give you the courage and boldness to declare with your whole heart, the words of Peter, "**Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.**"

May God grant us grace to do so in this time of darkness and comprise; in this time of selling out in a panic to the deceptions of the world. **Go to the Lord with a humble heart,** asking Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. It is the only way you will be able to be bold and courageous in proclaiming the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a time when many are deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing, who betray the true faith that is grounded in Jesus Christ alone and His one atoning sacrifice on the cross shedding His precious and sinless blood for the forgiveness of sins, and obtaining for repentant and steadfast true believers an everlasting inheritance in the new heaven and the new earth to the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit – **For to Him alone belong all glory, honor, wisdom and power, forever!**

**AMEN!**