

August 25, 2024 – Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Come to Believe” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: John 6:56-69

We are almost at the end of Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John, and the conversation Jesus had with his disciples and the crowd he fed with five loaves of bread and two fish is coming to an end.

This time the conversation turns from the topic of “bread” to the topic of “believe” because even among His many followers, there were those who thought that there was no way Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, could have come down from heaven. They totally agreed with the Pharisees and the Scribes in the belief that Jesus was just another human being like everybody else.

They could not believe in His words of being the “Bread of Life”. They could not believe or accept the invitation of Jesus’ symbolic words to eat his flesh and drink his blood. So they left. Those that could not believe were no longer His followers or disciples, but the twelve He had chosen stayed with Him.

He asked them, *“Do you also wish to go away?”* It was then that Peter said, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”*

“We have come to believe,” Peter said. That is a remarkable, interesting statement from Peter.

“Come to believe” implies that Peter and the disciples’ belief in the Lord Jesus as the Holy One from God had been happening or growing in them over the passage of time with Jesus. One moment at a time, one sign at a time, one miracle at a time, one teaching at a time, one Gospel at a time, helped the disciples to grow in faith and belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps it didn’t happen all at once, perhaps it wasn’t that Jesus met them at the lakeshore one day and immediately they believed in him.

“We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God,” Peter said. More likely it was a gradual growth of faith and belief in the Lord for the disciples. When it comes to relationships, that is how things work. We don’t trust, believe and put our faith in someone the first time we meet them. It takes time and work to come to believe in a person.

Peter and the other disciples had built that kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus. Over time they believed in Him, they knew Him and trusted Him. This belief and trust is what is behind Peter's answer to the Lord's question, "*Do you also wish to go away?*" Peter said, "*Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.*"

This answer from Peter, "*To whom can we go?*", tells us how much he has grown in faith, trust and belief in our Lord. Peter could have gone to his fishing partner, or to the priest at the Temple. Peter could have gone to the Roman Centurion or Governor. Peter had choices to whom he could go, but none of them had what the Lord had, that is "The words of eternal life".

It sounds as if Peter had the words from Psalm 118 in his mind: "*It is better to trust in the Lord than to rely in the flesh, it is better to trust in the Lord than to rely in rules.*" (Psalm 118:8-9)

"*Lord, to whom shall we go?*" These words from Peter are ringing down through the ages and should deeply impress upon our hearts the thought that Christ alone can satisfy the longings of our human nature, but it doesn't always work that way for us. It didn't work that way for the disciples either.

There were times when they only trusted in themselves, in their selfish dreams, desires and abilities to be first, to sit always at the right hand of the Lord. Judas Iscariot, trusted more in the Temple rulers than in the Lord Jesus, which makes me ask, to what or whom do we go to appease or ease our longings, our needs?

I want to tell you a story about a man in whom God has moved so miraculously. I'll walk you through it.

Mel Pellinen was a big strapping guy. Mel for years worked as a butcher, he had carried whole sides of beef on his shoulders. Then one day he threw a 250-pound side onto his back and heard it crack. He went down and for the next 10 years he suffered incredible pain.

Mel had several surgeries but nothing helped, so, where did he go? He started drinking. Eventually he was on the edge of suicide, his wife was ready to leave him, and his family was coming apart at the seams.

That's when a friend of his started going to church. He invited Mel to come with him. Mel would only go if his friend would go with him. Mel told his friend that about a month before he had been in the hospital for

yet another surgery and was ready to quit everything. He decided to pray. It was during this prayer that he suddenly heard a voice which said, "You are going to be all right. I am with you." And then he felt an incredible sense of peace.

Since that day Mel stopped drinking. The pain wasn't gone but his attitude had changed and it was bearable. Mel's life and experience are a good example of what it means to believe in Jesus, to hear His words of life that appease people's soul and spirit. To know Christ this way is only possible if we begin a personal relationship with Him, to know Him and to trust Him.

Peter's answer to the Lord tells us of his personal relationship with the Lord. Peter would not leave the Lord, would not go away from Him, because Peter knew Jesus, trusted Him and had come to believe in Him.

In the Gospel of John Chapter 20 Jesus said to the Apostle Thomas:

"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

We are blessed to believe in our Lord Jesus, especially in an era where fewer and fewer people believe, know the Lord, and trust Him. There isn't anyone else to turn to. Nobody else has the words of eternal life, only Him, That is why we follow Him and stay with Him and He with us. *Amen.*

