

No better place to be (John 6:56-69; Ephesians 6:10-20)

The disciples remember every miracle that Jesus did, every truth that he proclaimed.

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Earlier in John 6, a large crowd wanted to make Jesus king after he miraculously satiated their physical hunger. Now, in verses 56-69, many people stop following him because they do not agree with his teachings. Whether or not the two episodes involve the same people, they demonstrate a common human behavioral pattern: We tend to exalt those with whom we agree and who can benefit us in some way. And we tend to reject those with whom we don't agree and who do not have anything "good" to offer us. It is either good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable.

However, by rejecting those with whom we don't agree, we might be missing a blessing. As soon as Jesus says something that many of his followers do not agree with, they forget all the good that Jesus has done for them. But Peter and the other 11 disciples remember every miracle that Jesus did and every truth that he proclaimed. Therefore, they believe that he is the Holy One of God, and they understand that there is no better place they can be than in his presence.

Something else we see in this passage is Jesus' commitment to speak the truth the living God sent him to proclaim. He is intimidated when many of his followers turn back. He continues speaking truth and challenging his disciples. In our day, sometimes Christian leaders shy away from proclaiming the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ—love, peace, forgiveness, acceptance, grace, reconciliation—because they are afraid of people's reaction. Instead they preach a cheap message. They

preach what they know people want to hear, not what God has called them to preach.

Ephesians 6:10-20 offers powerful instructions for resisting the spiritual forces of evil that seek to separate us from doing God's will:

1. Proclaim the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ at all times.
2. Strive to live a righteous life.
3. Be agents of peace and reconciliation in the world.
4. Have faith in our Lord, believing that God is for us and with us.
5. Believe and value our salvation.
6. Let the Holy Spirit guide us and take control over our lives.
7. Pray in the Spirit at all times.
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By doing this, Paul says, we will be alert and spiritually prepared to resist the devil's temptations. It seems that this requires a lot of work from our part, but it is Jesus who empowers us. By eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood, by abiding in Jesus, we gain the energy and strength we need.