Chameleon - Part 4

# You Don’t Want to Leave Too, Do You?

## (John 6:53-68)

Today is the conclusion of this series Chameleon and we’ve been talking about living our lives on the fence, living in a condition of uncertainty, an undecided position between two polar opposites. And so, Chameleons try really hard to fit in, to match their environment, just to blend into their culture, and yet as followers of Christ we must fight the urge to fit in, because we were meant to be salt and light, a city on a hill. Jesus said it this way,

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?” He said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden…” And so, “let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

My prayer is that this message series has been a wake-up call to each one of you as followers of Christ, because chameleons just blend into their surroundings, they’re not willing to stand up or stand out.

Now, over the past several weeks, we’ve heard Joshua say, “Choose for yourselves whom you will serve?” We saw Gideon come out of hiding with 300 men and hold their position against an army of 135,000; trusting that God was fighting this battle for them. And last week Elijah asked, “How long will you waver between two opinions?” And the apostle Paul reminded us that to know Jesus and to be found in him is worth giving up everything that you’ve been holding onto. In fact, he said it this way,

“Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ… I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him…” (Philippians 3:7-9).

And so, I wonder if there’s anybody else here who recognizes that Jesus is worthy of anything you could sacrifice; that he’s worthy of your life, worthy of your tithe, worthy of it all? I wonder if there’s anybody listening that would be bold enough to say, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”? You see, some of you are awful quiet right now, and I know when we get around strangers we’re less likely to be loud about the things we’re passionate about, but we’re family here. Is there anybody here that knows Jesus is worthy, that nothing compares to knowing him, anybody here that’s passionate about worshiping their king?

Today as we turn to the word of God in John chapter 6, Jesus is going to ask a question that needs an answer, because he’s looking for people that are committed to following him, committed to being here, committed to growing in the word, committed to serving in his church. And so, as we turn to the word of God in verse 53, Jesus is going to challenge the commitment of the people that have been following him.

“Jesus said to them”, speaking to the crowd of people that had gathered in chapter 6. These were those that had followed him across the lake, those who were miraculously fed with the five loaves and two fish, and Jesus said to those that gathered there in Capernaum, some of those 5,000 that had been fed, he said,

"I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum” (John 6:53-59).

Jesus challenges his followers to step up in their level of commitment and devotion to him because he recognized that many of them were very superficial when it came to the things of God.

“On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60).

And it was a hard teaching because I think Jesus gets jealous of how easily we get distracted by lesser things. Sometimes I wonder if Jesus doesn’t wish he had a church packed full of followers that were like sports fans, because it’s hard to find loyalty like that. His disciples said, “This is a hard teaching to accept” and I wonder if Jesus doesn’t get a little jealous when he sees the level of devotion that many Christians have when it comes to their favorite team.

You see, sports fans don’t care if it’s freezing out, if it’s pouring down rain, or even about the humidity, because they’re committed to their team. Sports fans are all in, it doesn’t matter whether it’s baseball, soccer, or football, they’ll be out there in a parka or a raincoat, they’ll put on gloves and hats, even taking off their shirts and painting their chests and faces. They don’t care what the weather is, they don’t care about the crowds, it could be standing room only and you couldn’t keep them away. Not only that, but you also can’t get them to go home, because they’ll stay there for hours in the parking lot after the game tailgating and celebrating.

I wonder if Jesus doesn’t wish he had some disciples, some followers, like sports fans? You know, believers that would go to church even if it’s raining, even if they have to park too far away, or have trouble finding a seat. I wonder if Jesus doesn’t wish he had more Christians that weren’t looking at their watch before the sermon even starts; followers that didn’t grumble and complain that it was either too hot or too cold in the church? I wonder if Jesus doesn’t find it saddening, that so many Christians are devoted to something that has no lasting value and have so little interest in spending time with him.

Jesus said, “the one who feeds on me will live because of me” and some of his followers came to him and said,

"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60).

They said, this is a hard teaching to accept, and yet it’s just one of many examples where people misunderstood the spiritual truth that Jesus was communicating to them. He said, “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” and even though a literal interpretation created an absurdity they took it at face value. It was just as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 13, verse 14,

“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes” (Matthew 13:14-15).

And we’ve seen this over and over and over again in John’s gospel. For example, when Jesus drove everybody out of the temple area in chapter 2, scattering the coins of the moneychangers and overturning the tables, the Jews asked him by what authority he did this? Jesus answered them in verse 19 saying,

"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Thinking he was talking about their temple, the Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" (John 2:19-20).

And yet the Bible says in verse 21, “The temple he had spoken of was his body” (John 2:21).

Or in John chapter 3, Jesus tells a Pharisee named Nicodemus, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Nicodemus takes him literally and replies,

“How can a man be born when he is old?" "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" (John 3:4).

Another time, Jesus asked a woman at a well in chapter 4 for a drink of water. She was surprised that he would ask a Samaritan woman for a drink and he said,

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said taking him literally, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?” (John 4:10-11).

Time and time again Jesus declares profound spiritual truth and the people are confused because they take what he said literally. They’re hearing, but not understanding; seeing but never perceiving.

This is exactly what we see happening again in John chapter 6, because all Jesus said was, “My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. The one who feeds on me, who feeds on this bread, will live forever.” And so, Jesus was merely communicating to them that just as you take real food and drink into your body, it becomes part of you, and it gives you life. In the same way, he says, you must receive me into your innermost being so that I become part of you and you will live forever because of me.

And so, for us to take the words of Jesus literally here is to make the same mistake those people made. And the Bible says, “Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this,” Jesus said to them in verse 61,

“Does this offend you?” (John 6:61).

And it’s just as Isaiah said, “Their hearts had become calloused,” they misunderstood his words, they were offended by what he taught, and so they rejected him. They stumbled over the fact that he claimed to have come down from heaven and that they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to be saved. And so, Jesus says in verse 62, if you stumble over this,

“What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:62-63).

In other words, Jesus clarifies himself, and explains that he was speaking figuratively about spiritual things and that he didn’t intend for it to be taken literally. He said, it’s the Spirit that gives life, the flesh counts for nothing, and it’s my words that are spirit and life. And so, he’s not teaching them that they must practice cannibalism, because he says there is no salvation in the flesh. In fact, the Bible says that it is we who are the children of God, we are those “who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

And so, Jesus said, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” And we partake of his flesh and his blood by receiving his word, by making it our own, by trusting him for life and believing that he is the word become flesh. That’s what the Bible tells us in John chapter 1, verse 14, and that’s why Jesus said,

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life” (John 5:24).

He said, “unless you receive all of me, hearing my word, believing him who sent me, and surrendering completely to me, you have no life in you.” And he’s simply telling the crowds, I want your trust, I want your love, I want your devotion, because I am worthy of your lives.

Jesus calls his followers to stop living as chameleons, to be all in the kingdom, but he knew “there were some who did not believe.” And so, in verse 65 he said,

"This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." And John tells us, “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (John 6:65-66).

Jesus thinned out the flock, many of those who had followed him went back to their old lives. Those who didn’t believe went back to their dead religion. He had shown them the way, but they turned away, they rejected him, and in verse 67 he turned to the 12 apostles and asked,

"You do not want to leave too, do you?” (John 6:67).

Peter spoke up for them all saying,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Peter understood that Jesus’ words were spirit and truth, that he was speaking about his word, believing and trusting in him for eternal life, and not about literal flesh and blood.

I wonder if there are any of you that believe that Jesus is the food and drink that you need for eternal life? And that you’re committed to live and feed on that bread that came down from heaven, believing that he is the way, the truth, and the life? I wonder if there’s anybody here that has the courage to give it all to Jesus and to stop blending into our culture like a chameleon?

I’ve been preaching about this for weeks and it’s our choice as a church. The problem in America today is that many Christians have sold out to our culture instead of being sold out to Jesus. And so, they try not to be offensive, they try to be accepted, trying to fit in and they think they can live however they want and that God is going to be okay with that, but he is not okay with that.

In fact, Jesus tells us that it is possible for people to talk the right talk, to believe the right things, to do the right things and still not be saved.

In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus describes a choice that all Christians have to make. In verse 13 he says,

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

In other words, there are two ways, two gates, two roads that appear to go to heaven, but the reality is that one leads to destruction or hell, and the other leads to life or heaven, but only a few find it. And so, there is the many and the few, two ways, the broad road is the easy way, it’s the popular way, but the fact that “everybody does it” is not proof that what they’re doing is right. Because actually the opposite is true, God’s people have always been the few, just a remnant, a small minority in this world.

The reason why is not difficult to discover, because the small gate, the way of life is narrow, it’s not easy, it can be lonely and costly. But it’s the narrow road that leads to life and as we walk through life, we’ll find many walking on the broad road. There will be many who claim to be following Jesus, but there chameleons, doing whatever they want, thinking they can say whatever they want, sleep with whoever they want, smoke whatever they want, drink whatever they want, just holding onto all of their sin and worldliness. But Jesus says if they want to enter the narrow gate, they’re going to have to give up those things, because they can’t carry the baggage through, it’s just too small, too narrow.

Peter and the other apostles were standing there with Jesus, watching many of the other disciples walk away. Many of those people that followed Jesus across the lake were looking for a Jesus that was okay with them cussing people out, sleeping around, neglecting their marriage, cheating on their tithes, gossiping, sexting, or texting this and that, but Jesus wasn’t okay with that then and he’s not okay with it now. And so, some of you will never convince me that you have a real relationship with Jesus if there’s no repentance in your life, no change in lifestyle, because Jesus says you’re on the wide road and you’re hoping for a cheap grace.

Many of Jesus disciples said, “This is a hard teaching,” and they turned back and no longer followed him. Jesus said,

“You don’t want to leave too, do you?” (John 6:67).

I want to ask you to make a decision today, are you just going to blend into the culture, or are you going to fight the urge to fit in and sell out to Jesus? You’ve got a choice, you’ve got to choose whom you’re going to serve, whether yourself, living for our culture, or living for the Lord. It’s your choice, I can’t make anybody believe in my Jesus, I can’t legislate morality in your life, it’s your choice. But I will tell you, I’ve made my decision,

“As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

On Christ the solid rock I stand because all other ground is sinking sand, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

Now, I’m going somewhere, this all has a purpose, and as we close today, we’re going to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together. And so, I want to ask the ushers to distribute the elements, passing out the cup of grape juice with the wafer of bread. And I’ve got to say that I find it interesting that some people even today still think that this is what Jesus was talking about when we partake of the bread and the cup. Some people believe that we literally eat his flesh and drink his blood when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper together, however a literal interpretation of this passage requires removing it from the context which is simply poor biblical interpretation.

We simply can’t ignore the text around this passage and refuse to consider why Jesus would introduce the Lord’s Supper to a bunch of unbelieving Jews before he did with the twelve apostles. I mean these others were grumbling and arguing among themselves about everything that he said and this goes against Jesus’ own words in Matthew chapter 7 when he said,

"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:6).

Not to mention the fact that he made it very clear in this passage that he was not speaking in literal terms. In verse 63 he said,

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

And so, he even explained that he was using human analogy to convey a spiritual truth just like he had discussed the new birth with Nicodemus and spoke of living water to the Samaritan woman.

One other important point is that if Jesus was speaking about the Lord’s Supper, then everybody who has never shared that experience is spiritually dead and without hope, because Jesus made it very clear that this eating and drinking was absolutely necessary for eternal life. He made no exceptions and that seems to be completely out of character for our gracious God to exclude from salvation anyone who hasn’t or can’t participate in the Lord’s Supper.

The Jews who were following Jesus began to grumble about him because of what he said, they argued among themselves, and Jesus being aware of what they were saying said to his disciples,

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” (John 6:67).

And so, today the choice is yours, will you join me at the table? Do you feel a spiritual hunger and thirst within you for more of Jesus? Today if you’re willing to admit that need and come to Jesus he’ll save you and satisfy you forever.

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