

*Sermon: A Radical Commitment*  
*Text: John 6:59 – 69*  
*Date: August 23, 2009 AM*  
*Place: Jesup First UMC*

We're a fickle people, aren't we? Sometimes it blows my mind to think about how quickly public opinion can change. Once upon a time OJ Simpson was a hero and daddies wanted their sons to grow up and run through airports. And it wasn't too long ago that Michael Vick was the jewel of Georgia; and everywhere you went you saw Falcon's jerseys with # 7 on the back. Hey, it was just a few weeks ago that Barack Obama was the second coming of the messiah. But boy, how things change? Today OJ is in jail; Michael Vick is in Philadelphia and Barack Obama is in the dog house.

Well, there was a day when the crowds gathered around Jesus. Everywhere He went people crowded in on Him; they wanted to be near Him, to hear Him preach, to see Him heal; they wanted to touch Him and to be touched by Him, but all of that changed in one moment in time.

John tells us a crowd of people came to Capernaum, looking for Jesus. And Jesus said: **"I know why you came looking for me. You didn't come to see me; you came because I fed you. Well, I am the Bread of Life ... and if you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not live."** And the people began to wonder: *"Who does He think He is? Don't we know Him? He's just one of the guys and yet, how can He say things like this?"* And even His disciples began to murmur among themselves: **"He's preaching too hard; nobody can live up to these standards."** And John says that

some of the disciples left Him and followed Him no more.

Can you grasp that? Can you even get your mind around that? This isn't the crowd we're talking about; this is Jesus' own disciples. These are the people who have followed Him throughout Galilee; they've seen the miracles; they've heard the teaching; and now, they've left Him. How does that happen? How do you go from Israel's greatest celebrity to yesterday's news in one moment in time? Oh how public opinion changes. In the eyes of some, Jesus went from a hero to a zero in a snap! And they left and so, He turned to His core group – the big twelve – and said: *“What about you? Will you leave me too?”* And Peter said: *“Where else can we go? Only you have the words of eternal life?”*

Eating *“my flesh”* and drinking *“my blood”*! That's what Jesus was talking about, but what does it mean? ***Well, some have seen in this text an encouragement to participate in the sacrament.*** When Jesus said: *“Eat my body and drink my blood,”* the church of John's day would have immediately thought about Holy Communion. Sixty years passed between Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection and the writing of John's Gospel. And over those 60 years the church's liturgy was taking shape. In fact, by the first decade of the second century, just 10 years after John wrote his Gospel, one of the Church Fathers, Justin Martyr gives us a description of worship and Holy Communion that is very similar to that found in the front of our Hymnal.

Holy Communion has always been an important part of the church's worship. And in spite of those who skip church on Communion Sundays because they don't want to bother, there are great and lasting benefits involved in participating in the sacrament. Jesus said: "*Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has life,*" life that comes through forgiveness of sin and the laying aside of the weight that hinders us along our Christian journey. Some see this as a call to faithful participation in the sacrament.

But is it possible that there is more to this text than that? ***You see, I believe this is a call to faithful response to the Word of God.*** Verse 63 says: "*The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life, but among you there are some who do not believe.*" The Bread of Life is Jesus and His Word! And it is our respond to Jesus and His Word that ultimately leads to life or death.

We either live or die based upon what we do with Jesus and His Word. ***But first, we have to hear the word.*** Sometimes, we don't listen very well. Franklin Roosevelt often complained that nobody really listened to him. So, he decided to try an experiment. So, as he people passed by and shook his hand one day, he whispered: "*I murdered my grandmother this morning.*" And everyone responded, "*Oh that's good*" or "*Keep up the good work, Sir.*" But then, the ambassador from Bolivia came through the line and Roosevelt whispered: "*I murdered my grandmother this morning.*" And the ambassador said: "*I'm sure she had it coming sir.*"

Friends, it's important that we really listen to God's Word, that we take it in, that we read it, study it, and meditate on it. It's important that we take it in at Sunday School, in Bible Study, and in worship. Because God's Word is the Bread of Life; it is nourishment for our souls. Jesus said: "*It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that flows from the mouth of God.'*" We must listen to God's Word.

**Second, we must live out God's Word.** The Bible says: "*Be doers of the word and not hearers only.*" You see, I think that what scared Jesus' disciples the most that day was Jesus' call to commitment. When Jesus said "*eat my body and drink my blood*", they heard "die," "commit your very life to me," "Teach what I teach and do what I do" and they ran for the hills.

Someone said: "People don't reject the Bible because it contradicts itself; most people reject the Bible because it contradicts them." You see, there's a part of us that just doesn't want to make that kind of commitment. We want to be selfish; we want to look out for number one. But Jesus says: "If you want to follow me, eat this bread and drink this cup." One day, two of Jesus' disciples came and asked for positions of greatness in His Kingdom. And He said: "*Are you able to drink from the same cup that I drink from?*" Jesus says, "So, if you want to have positions of honor in the Kingdom, you've got to do what I do, live like I live, serve like I serve, die like I die." This is a call to radical commitment.

You know what brothers and sisters? There has never been a more important time in the history of Jesup First UMC than this. There has never been a time that called for a more radical commitment of ourselves – heart, soul, mind, and strength – to God and to His church than this.

Now, I think God asks us to make four basic commitments:

***First, we should commit to magnify.*** God demands our worship and at Jesup First, there are three opportunities every Sunday to worship – 8:55, 11:00 and 6:00. Now, our culture has become so mobile and we're so busy, but friends I believe God is calling us to a radical commitment to worship. And I believe that a radical commitment to worship leads to life.

***Second, we should commit to maturity.*** God asks us to grow in our faith by studying His word. And here at Jesup First, we offer Sunday School classes and Wednesday Bible Study and even small groups to us to and a radical commitment to study leads to life.

***Third, we should commit to ministry.*** God asks us to use our time and the gifts and talents that He has given us to minister to the needs of others. There is greeters and audio and video technicians; we need teachers and office volunteers; we need people who will visit as part of the visitation ministry. Everybody needs a place to serve; nobody needs to just sit on a pew. God is calling us for a radical commitment and a radical commitment to ministry leads to life.

***Fourth, He asks us to commit to mission.*** A very big aspect of the Christian life is reaching out to others,

inviting others to the programs and ministries of our church. We need to be a church of people who reach out in love to our Friends, our Relatives, our Associates at work, and our Neighbors, to include them in the First Methodist Family. Listen, a radical commitment to mission will lead to life.

When the great tenor Luciano Pavarotti was a boy, his father encouraged him to sing. And when he got older, he decided to study music, but at the same time he enrolled in a teacher's college. And one day, he asked his daddy, "*What should I do? Should I teach or should I sing?*" And his daddy said: "*Luciano, if you sit in two chairs, you will fall between them. To live, you must choose one chair.*" And Luciano said: "*Now I think whether it's laying bricks, writing a book, or whatever we choose, we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that's the key. Choose one chair.*"

You know what, friends? I fear that we as a church have been sitting in two chairs, but today Jesus invites us "*eat this bread and drink this cup,*" "*commit yourself fully to me*" for this is truly the way to life.

All to Jesus, I surrender. All to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him,  
in His presence daily live. I surrender all. I surrender all.  
All to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**