

"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Where do you go? Where do you go and who do you turn to when you need help? Sometimes that question is easily answered. When you are sick you go to a doctor, when you have a toothache you see your dentist, when your car breaks down you turn to the RAA or mechanic. You turn the yellow pages to find the person you need to do the job or buy what you want. And if all else fails you go to the web and there will be so many options it confuses you.

But where do you go when you are afraid, lonely, searching, and when you feel guilty and ashamed? Who do you turn to when you realise life is short and fragile? Who do you turn to for relationship with God, for forgiveness, and for eternal life?

Jesus had said: **"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." v57,58 "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."v63**

"Turn to me, look to me, listen to me, believe in me, follow me, eat and drink me" Jesus was saying to them if you want life, life now in relationship with the living God and eternal life.

Many people wanted what Jesus was offering, just like many do today. They want assurance that the past is forgiven, and that there is an eternal future waiting for them when they die and that there is a God and that you can know him now, they want life with God now and eternal life, but they find it hard to accept that all this can be found in Jesus Christ, just like many do today.

"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him" v66. People who had believed for a while but found it all too hard. They fell away just like they do today. Something in us can sympathize with those who have fallen away. Each of us is always on the edge of doubt and even unbelief. What is so hard about Jesus' words for you? Is it his claim to be God? Is it his claim to be the only one who can save us and that no one can come to him without the gift of faith? Is it his call to follow that is too hard? Is it his graphic imagery that calls us to eat and drink of him that you find offensive? It is hard to believe in what we can't see, hard to live the Christian life in a culture that works against it, hard just to get to worship, hard to read the Bible, hard to wait for his promises to us to come true?

Jesus looked at his disciples and asked them: **"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." v67,68** Who else can assure you all is forgiven, God is with you now and you can be with him forever? **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."**

Georgina has heard the words of eternal life today and been given the gift of eternal life today by the words of Jesus spoken over her at her baptism. **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"** Jesus promises her. At the beginning of life she is safe with Jesus and can turn to him and look to him throughout her life knowing he will always be there for

her no matter what. She can find comfort, forgiveness and hope from him and his words. As she looks to him she can know that even though this life is uncertain her eternal future is secure.

Georgina's grandma is here today all the way from Lithuania. She gave me a postcard with a picture I had seen some time ago on TV about a place called the "hill of crosses". Look it up on the net. There are hundreds of thousands of them placed by pilgrims over many years. People go there in faith to grieve, to look for life, healing and hope and peace. In the face of oppression and trouble they placed crosses on that hill. Where else shall we go than to the cross of Jesus, in all of life, and for life now and for eternal life? The word of the cross is the word of life for us. The world around us says it is nonsense and has nothing to offer. The Soviets bulldozed the "hill of crosses" 3 times, it was purposefully flooded, and the road leading there blockaded. Each time, more crosses reappeared. The words of Jesus, the words of his death and resurrection for us can't be destroyed or taken away from you by anyone or anything. The cross where Jesus died to give you his life, eternal life will stand forever and his words will sustain you in your pilgrimage through life and death.

At that other end of life is Bette, who died last night in Flinders Medical Centre. **"To whom shall she go?"** Jesus alone has the words of eternal life she needed and her loved ones need to know about her. Words like these: **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though they die, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26).** **"My sheep listen to my voice, I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27,28)**

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" Where else than Jesus can you go to hear words life giving words like those? I read words of Jesus to Bette yesterday. Even an unconscious child of God can hear those words because that is our faith, embedded deep in us by God's Spirit.

I know some of you are grieving in other ways too this morning. As you know I am leaving at the end of November for my new role as District President. Earlier than expected, in fact not expected at all! But that's God's timing, always keeping us on our toes of faith, always moving on to something that requires trust and faith in him and his words. Pastors fear that when they go the people will fall away. While it is inevitable that some will rejoice when a pastor leaves others will grieve. That's touching, but pastors fear that people may become so attached to them that they fall away and stay away when they leave. If that happens we have to confess that we have failed, failed to help you to see your attachment to Jesus and his words is far more important than your attachment to us. Probably it is a good thing we do come and go, and only Jesus remains. When the time comes for me to leave Glenelg in three months and you don't like the new pastor, if any of you are ever tempted to fall away ask yourself what Jesus asked his disciples and remember the reply of Peter:

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Keep coming to wherever the cross is, wherever Jesus and his words are, wherever the pastor. Some will speak it more persuasively than others and be more entertaining than others, but it's the same words of Jesus, the same flesh and blood of Jesus offered in the word and at communion to eat and drink for your eternal well-being.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."