

The sermon starts with the following dialogue between Judas and one of the disciples of Jesus.

JUDAS: (ENTERS ALONG WITH MICAELA)

MICAH: I can't take it any longer, Judas.

JUDAS: Come on now, Micaela, settle down.

MICAH: I'm leaving.

JUDAS: Oh, no, you're not. You told me you would stay with Jesus.

MICAH: Judas, I just can't accept some of the things he says.

JUDAS: Oh, that last thing he said about eating his flesh -- is that it?

MICAH: Yes, that's exactly it.

JUDAS: Your trouble is you're trying to understand it.

MICAH: Of course I'm trying to understand it. I'm one of his disciples.

JUDAS: I told you when we started following Jesus not to listen to him.

MICAH: I remember you said that, Judas, but I thought you were just joking.

JUDAS: I was not joking. I never joke. This is serious. If Jesus is going to be the Messiah and save our nation from the Romans then it's up to people like us to do it. He's a teacher, a dreamer -- you can't expect him to save anyone, can you?

MICAH: He says he will.

JUDAS: Just talk. All people who claim to be the Messiah will talk like that.

MICAH: I believed him at first. But now ...

JUDAS: You started listening to him. That was your first mistake.

MICAH: I used to think his teaching was wonderful. Life-changing.

JUDAS: Listen to me. I'm the one who has the plan. I'm the one who's in charge of the money, aren't I?

MICAH: Yes. You do have all the money.

JUDAS: Well, then I'm the one you should be listening to, right?

MICAH: All right, then, what's your plan?

JUDAS: It's not complicated. All we have to do is use the money we have to pay the people we need. I know some of the high officials and they said they're sympathetic to our cause. They want to get out from under Rome's rule, too.

MICAH: In other words I can just act like a disciple. I don't have to really believe any of the difficult things.

JUDAS: That's right. Jesus himself said we should be as wise as serpents but as innocent as doves.

MICAH: I don't know.

JUDAS: Come on. What do you have to go back to?

MICAH: My family.

JUDAS: Jesus said that if we're not willing to give up our families, then we're not worth following him.

MICAH: For a guy who doesn't listen to him, Judas, you sure quote him a lot.

JUDAS: I listen selectively.

MICAH: I don't think I can do it.

JUDAS: You can't just quit. Remember what I told you, you're in this until the end.

MICAH: Well, I'm quitting.

JUDAS: Oh, no! You're staying. I need your help.

MICAH: You don't need my help. Your plan seems like a good one, I just want to go home.

JUDAS: Okay, leave then. When Jesus comes into his kingdom I'll be a high official. I'll be the power behind the throne. And where will you be?

MICAH: I'll be home. Good-bye, Judas. (HE EXITS)

JUDAS: Loser. (HE EXITS) (1)

"The dialogue points out one of the major dilemmas found in this passage. At times, the things that Jesus says and teaches are easy to understand, easy to grasp, easy to follow. They lifted you up. They give wings to your soul and spirit, they set you free.

But then there are the hard teachings. Jesus says, "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life within you." In hindsight, we know he was talking about the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but can you imagine hearing this for the first time? Many walked out on this sermon. But this isn't the only hard teaching? How about the one about "*turning the other cheek*" or "*loving your enemy*"? And how about the one that says "*take up your cross and following me.*" The rich young man.. sell all you have and give the money to the poor and then, follow me. You remember that?

All of these are hard teachings. Hard to understand and hard to do. And at each of them, some of the disciples, like Micah in our skit, turned away. They couldn't understand them, they couldn't go the distance, so they quit.

I don't know if any of you have walked out during a sermon. I am sure some of you have thought about walking out. After I was ordained, my mother used to tell me, "Paulson, when you step on that pulpit and start saying stupid things, I always have the option of the rosary."

People take offense at lots of stuff these days about faith, about Church and sometimes during sermons.

- A sermon of on Immigration or undocumented brother and sisters, will irritate some of us and we walk away.
- The Pope's encyclical on Laudato si – climate change has upset lots of people and his popularity among our countrymen has plummeted.
- The issue of marriage, family, divorce or the cause of the unborn may upset some and they walk away.

On the other hand

- And preachers who rarely if ever call people to the tougher agendas of God--like witnessing and working for justice--are said to be loving and relational.
- And the pulpit that is quiet about racism and materialism and narcissism is said to be encouraging, and caring, and helpful.

It takes courage to put yourself in Jesus shoes today, It takes an act of faith be a leader in faith and especially a preacher. If we are not prepared to do and say unpopular things, we will be servants of the people, but not servants of God. Lovers of the people, but not lovers of God.

Karl Barth, Swiss theologian who was a pastor in Germany before World War II, faced a similar experience. One Sunday in the mid-1930s he was preaching on the text assigned by the lectionary, [John 3:16](#). At that time many Christians were among those Germans persecuting

Jews. Barth made the point in his sermon that Jesus was a Jew, that He had died for all the world, and that Jews were of the world. He said that anyone who loves Christ would not participate in the contemptuous yet widespread ill-treatment of the Jews. Many in the congregation walked out in disgust before he finished his sermon. One wrote a scathing letter denouncing his sermon

The sad story in this passage of Jesus being forthright, and people choosing to walk away is that they missed one of the most profound teachings and the greatest gift offered by God – his body and blood.

Saddened by people who left him and went back to their former ways of life, Jesus turns to the twelve, his inner circle, and asks, *"Do you also wish to go away?"*

Here's one of those instances when Peter really shines. Sometimes life gets hard and there seems to be nothing but wreckage all around. *"Where else could we go?"* but to Jesus. No one else has *"the words of eternal life."* No one else can offer salvation. Peter may not have understood it? But he was able to accept it because he knew that *"Jesus has the words of eternal life."*

"Where else would we go" when we're lost in the pile of wreckage and carnage that's all around us?

"Where else would we go" when life suddenly skids off of our well planned highway?

"Where else would we go" when life takes a plunge like never before

"Where else would we go?" TV doesn't hold the answer.

"Where else would we go?" Wall Street doesn't hold the answer.

"Where else would we go?" Hollywood doesn't hold the answer.

"Where else would we go?" Materialism doesn't hold the answer.

We're called to believe and to follow Jesus. In the midst of the wreckage that happens in life, look to Jesus. He has the answers.

I would like to conclude my sermon with another story. It is a story about St. Thomas Aquinas. He was praying one day in the chapel in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He was alone and Jesus spoke to him from the crucifix. "My son, you have been faithful. Ask me anything you want." Now, St. Thomas had chosen poverty so money had no attraction for him. Nor did look for recognition or fame. But he did not say to Jesus, "I am fine, thank you. I don't need anything." What he replied was, "It is thee I desire, O Lord. give me Thyself."

In a real sense St. Thomas was making the boldest request. He was asking for everything. So was Peter. "Where shall me go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life.

Here is a question for our reflection. Would let the world of God challenge some of your deeply help assumptions? Would let your faith shed a light on your political and social leanings? Your economics? Would you let God transform you from within? To make you into a new person?