John 6:47 Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life.

You’ve heard me speaking of all the events that are unfolding in our Gospel reading. For the last few Sundays, and actually for the next two Sundays we are going to hear the continuation of this history of Jesus. This history marks a turning point. As this history unfolds, we will find that Jesus will enter the “Year of Opposition.” This is his last year of ministry that will end with his crucifixion. It is called the “Year of Opposition” because the crowds stop following Jesus and with that happening, the Jewish religious leadership can up their attacks, up their call for the rejection of Jesus as a false prophet. Clearly, we know that this strategy will work! It works from the viewpoint that they think they are getting rid of Jesus by having him killed and it works from our viewpoint because the Christ will become the atoning sacrifice for all of our sins.

Let’s remind you of all that has happened so far and what will be. Our theme is: **THE ISSUE OF FAITH!**

Remember that this history really started with Jesus and his disciples looking for a little down time because the disciples had just returned from their first successful preaching tour. The crowds were really pressing upon them and at the same time news of the beheading of John the Baptist had reached them. Jesus wanted them in a place where he could further instruct them and console them as they grieved John’s death.

Yet the crowds were able to track them and once they landed on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, they found themselves still surrounded by people. At least, they had time alone on the boats they were in. Needless to say, Jesus simply has compassion on the people and continues to preach and teach on the wonders of God.

As evening approached, Jesus is concerned for the welfare of the people. In a test of faith he asked the disciples how they could supply bread for this crowd, we are told it is 5,000 men besides women and children. All of this results in the miraculous feeding of this crowd. Not only is everyone satisfied but we are also told that twelve baskets of pieces were gathered. All of this from 5 loaves and two fish! The wonder of Jesus is just that, a wonder!

But it is this miracle that begins to turn the tide. The people agree that Jesus must be the Christ and that therefore Jesus must and should become their king! Jesus knowing this mood change, dismisses the disciples, puts them in the boat and sends them off. Then Jesus dismisses the crowd and eventually goes off on his own to engage the Father in prayer.

In the early morning Jesus goes out to meet his disciples. They are still on the lake, the wind being against them and them making little to no headway on their journey. Jesus walks out to them, yes, walks on the water to join them and on top of that as Jesus gets into the boat the wind simply stops and they find themselves right where they wanted to be! Another couple of miracles to show the power and majesty of Jesus.

As this new day begins, the crowds once again find Jesus. There are questions of how Jesus got there since many in the crowds had been at the feeding and they knew he hadn’t been in the boat. Yet Jesus gets off the boat with the disciples! Jesus does not elaborate on what happened, but rather wants the people to think about their motivations and hearts. Jesus reminds them not to focus in earthly things like the bread He supplied but rather to think spiritually. Jesus said to them: **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: You are not looking for me because you saw the miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. 27Do not continue to work for the food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”**

It is at this point that the people begin to argue with Jesus. They don’t like what he has to say. They don’t like that the fact that Jesus clearly tells them: “**This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.”** Jesus is telling them that the point and heart of faith is HIM! To believe that He is the Christ the Son of God who has come to save them.

And now, one of the most ridiculous and yet human things to be. These people next say to Jesus, **“So what miraculous sign are you going to do, that we may see it and believe you? What miraculous sign are you going to perform?** What? Jesus has been involved in his ministry for the past two years. He has done countless miracles, visible miracles, undeniable miracles before the crowds, including the people before him now. They had just eaten their fill because Jesus performed a great miracle and yet they demand a sign from Jesus, some special miracle, the one unique, special and awesome thing that will really cause them to believe! People, you have already seen and heard of thousands if not tens of thousands of miracles and you want more?

I can’t help but think how this is so today’s world. “If you want me to believe in Jesus then show me proof that Jesus really is who he says he is?” Let’s see: the Bible has proven itself 100% accurate. The Bible prophesied tons of signs of the Christ…Jesus has done those signs and more! The fact is, we could not and would not be still preaching and teaching Jesus were it not for the fact that He is God’s Son and our Savior from sin. The faith could not have survived on the personality of men…and yet here we are still preaching the truth and wonder of Jesus. Now, it is true, that since then, Satan has raised up all sorts of religions that imitate faith and yet every one of those religions is nothing more than “work righteous” platforms designed to focus on you and what you can do to earn your god’s favor. Be this, do that, accomplish this…the list is endless…but the bottom line is that they are religions that focus on what you think, want, and desire.

Do you recall the discussion Jesus has with them concern the gift of “manna” that God had given to the Israelites in the wilderness. The people are so out of it that they think it was Moses who provided the manna rather than God! Jesus corrects them. He says: **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34“Sir,” they said to him, “give us this bread all the time!” 35“I am the Bread of Life,” Jesus told them. “The one who comes to me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.”**

Here is where our text today picks up. They don’t like what Jesus has said. In their minds, Jesus is wrong and misled and they have the issue right. We read: **“So the Jews started grumbling about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42They asked, “Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? So how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”**

Do you feel you missed something here? The people before Jesus clearly grasp that Jesus has told them he is from heaven, that he is the Messiah they had long been awaiting. The people properly understood what Jesus has said and they didn’t like it. “Wait a minute! You want me to believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come to be our Savior? You want us to believe and listen to you?” At this point they ignore the last two years of miracles and wonders. They ignore the power and majesty that Jesus has displayed again and again. They ignore that Jesus is fulfilling completely their very own Scriptures! They get what Jesus has said and they reject it!

Now, at this point I will tell you what is coming in the next few weeks. The people do understand what Jesus has proclaimed to them but they are going to shift the focus, and I think they do that because to realize the truth of what they were going to do is too hard for them to consider. So they focus on the bread stuff. They focus on the bread, which is Jesus, and the eating of that bread as something way too ridiculous to believe. The Scripture proclaims of them: **“Many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching! Who can listen to it?”** At this point they walk away from Jesus. They no longer wish to hear about or follow Jesus. There is Jesus doing everything for their salvation and they simple reject him because it just doesn’t seem right to them! It is too hard!

Is that us? Do we find Jesus too hard? We are to believe he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. We are to believe Jesus lived the perfect life we could not and that he goes to the cross to atone for our sins. Yes, to grasp that Jesus took on the hell of every sin just for you and me, actually for the entire world. We are to believe that Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of Scripture, including the fact that He suffered, died and was buried. Including the fact that he rose from the dead, physically and actually rose from the dead, as the ultimate proof of his victory for us. We are to believe that Jesus ascended into heaven where he lives and reigns for the good of his Church and the souls of this world. And yes, we are to believe that putting water on a child in Jesus name grants them faith and eternal life because of he promises of Jesus! Yes, we are to believe that we do receive the true body and blood of Jesus in the bread and fruit of the vine of communion, because of the promise of Jesus! Heaven is our home, our eternal and sure home, because of Jesus! We are to hear and believe Jesus!

But sometimes I wonder, “Do we?” Jesus says that God’s Word and its promises are to be a part of our life, gladly, every day? Is it? Jesus says that he has given his church for the salvation of souls and the nourishing of faith through his Word and that you are to be a part of this. Are you? Let’s ask, “Do you miss more church than you attend?” Then have you walked away from Jesus because this is a hard teaching, who can listen to it? Seriously, I can’t begin to tell you of all the silly, block-headed, stubborn, and human excuses I have heard in my ministry that people use to justify that they have walked away from Jesus!

Here is the bottom line. **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life.”**

Faith is about Jesus and what Jesus has done for us. Faith is about the accomplishment of God for our very souls. Faith is focused on God’s goodness and mercy and that God in love gave his life that I might have eternal life and salvation. Faith is about Jesus! That Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior from sin in every way!

Do I grasp and understand everything Jesus? No! I can’t understand why God should so care for me that He gave his life for me. I can’t grasp how God promises to do everything necessary for my eternal life and salvation and that it is so in Jesus. Here is what I do know. God sends his Holy Spirit working through the Gospel in Word and sacrament to call, gather, enlighten and keep me in the one true faith. God wants me to keep hanging around with Jesus. God wants me to hear and follow Him! He is the Christ, the Son of God and our Savior from sin.

Clearly that is the message of Jesus found here. Listen again to what he says, “**Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling among yourselves. 44No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the Last Day. 45It is written in the Prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46I am not saying that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He is the one who has seen the Father. 47Amen, Amen, I tell you: The one who believes in me has eternal life. 48“I am the Bread of Life. 49Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat it and not die. 51I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”**

Those words make it clear that Jesus believes He is everything for salvation! Again, remember, people are going to walk away from Jesus. Missing church persistently is walking away from Jesus. Not partaking of the sacraments is walking away from Jesus! Not reading and making the Bible a part of your life is walking away from Jesus. Deciding that God is wrong about anything found in his Holy Word is walking away from Jesus! Deciding that Jesus just doesn’t meet your needs, as we will find in Judas soon, is walking away from Jesus. You can do it! You can walk away! But note, that is not what Jesus wants.

Jesus wants you to believe in Him. Jesus wants you to grasp that He will and has given His life for you. He wants you to be his. He wants you to inherit the heaven He has won for you. Jesus wants you to have eternal life! It is all in Him. Believe. Let’s be like the faithful 11 disciples who will eventually say in this history: **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe that you are the Holy One of God.’** Amen.