

**Constantly Choosing to Believe**      Third Week of Easter      Saturday, May 6, 2017  
8:15 AM    Acts 9:31-42;    **Jn 6:60-69**    (Through our freedom we can cut off this life, and we can cut ourselves off from the whole of creation, the presence of God.)

**“As a result of this, many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer walked with him.”**

I believe the evangelist puts this story into the gospel to show that from the very beginning—from the very beginning—there were problems with people who follow Jesus; they follow him, yes, but not really. **The followed him to a point, but then they broke away.** And the key is as he says here, **“It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail.”** Now, again, John is accused of being dualistic, but he’s trying to talk about different aspects of life, **different degrees of human life.** And **the spirit is a kind of life, a quality of life that is connected to what is beyond the human person as an individual.** It’s connected to the community. It’s connected to God. It’s connected to the whole of creation in a conscious way, consciously, the conscious connection, the Spirit. And **it’s through the spirit we get life.**

But in our lives the spirit is subject to our own freedom since **freedom is also of the spirit.** **We can cut off this life, and we can cut ourselves off from the bigger picture: the whole of creation, the whole of humanity, the communion of saints, the presence of God.** We can focus on something smaller, something more tangible, which he calls here the “flesh.” Ideally the flesh and spirit are all one, but **through our freedom we can cut off a part,** and we tend to. The world tends to do this, tends to focus on what is physical, tangible, visible, sensory; and that which is not we can completely push away or ignore. **Sometimes that is a deliberate choice.**

Now when it starts off, “This saying is hard,” the saying referred to, which precedes this section, is about his body and blood, how his “body and blood is real food and real drink,” and that he is “the bread that is come down from heaven and anyone who eats this bread will never

die, and his blood is real drink and anyone who drinks this will never thirst.” **That’s the saying that is hard. Well of course it’s hard if you interpret it literally;** it’s almost nonsensical. It’s talking about the life **Jesus is sharing with his people, his own life, his body, his blood, his soul, and his divinity.** All of it is given. This is the meaning of the Cross. **The Cross is his life given for the life of the world,** for the salvation of the world. Even the wicked God wants to save.

So this is all about **making choices.** What John makes very clear is **we have to actually choose to believe.** And **we don’t necessarily believe all at once.** Peter put it so well: “We have come to believe—**we have come to believe.**” Living with you all this time we have come to believe. We have come to perceive that “you are Holy One of God,” and we are convinced of it now, finally. But even that conviction didn’t last, did it? as Peter later after this time denied that he even knew Jesus. So **there is constant need for coming to Christ.** There is a constant need for affirming faith and choosing to believe what is not right in front of us so that we can be connected to the whole, to the creation, to the Creator, to God, to one another, and receive the gift of God himself, which we enact in ritual form every time we come to the table of the Lord.