

## Introduction

- Is division a good thing?
  - usually say no; Iraq; NI; Rwanda....
- Though as we stop and think a little, we do recognise that **division can be good**:
  - keeping warring parties apart to allow them time to negotiate;
  - separating criminals from the rest of society, for our protection and their punishment and rehabilitation;
- John 6 a **turning point in gospel**:
  - **first place John records Jesus causing division, generating opposition.**
- Easter Week was also a turning point in the gospel:
  - people turned from happy followers to a crowd baying for blood;
  - disciples had to turn from a power Messiah to a suffering Messiah;
  - central events of the faith...
- Miracle of bread provided - and then the claim to be the true bread, the essential ingredient for life
  - all of which prompts **three questions** that people ask of Jesus
  - questions that divide those who were to become his **followers** from those who could **no longer stomach the bread of life**

## The "How" Question

- **"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v.52)**
- Jews (usually religious rulers) taking him literally!
  - missing the point completely!
  - "What are you talking about!"
- So Jesus attempts to explain: **(vs.53-59)**
  - he was looking forwards from when he spoke to the last week of his life, to the Last Supper, to his death at Passover....
- Bread that Jesus gives tied to the Cross:
  - the life he gives comes from humbly kneeling at the foot of that Cross, utterly unable to find any other source of help, of food.

## The "Why" Question

- **"Why must it be so complicated?" (v.60)**
- Some of them at least seem to have got something of the point:
  - and found it a "hard teaching".
- Why hard?
- I don't think it was so much difficult to understand as it was difficult to accept:
  - Jews - law keepers - taken out of their hands, fed by Jesus, not by their actions;
  - demands humility, an awareness of sin lies at the heart of needing washed in sacrificial blood;
  - claim of divinity ("Father"), demands they admit they are wrong;
  - **Jesus presents stark choice: follow me and live, or die** - and that generation as much as our own says "it can't be that simple... it can't be that bad..."
- So many of Jesus' would be disciples were starting to wonder:
  - is he who he says he is? Are his claims true?
  - and if they are, am I prepared to throw in my lot with him?

## The "Where" Question

- **"Where else can we go?" (v.68)**
- Most of us, had we been in Jesus' shoes and faced with this kind of situation, would have said:
  - its OK, its not that bad, I'm sure we can work something out....
  - often our instinct is to compromise, so that we **avoid division**

## John 6:5-15,25-35,40,52,60,68 I am the Bread of Life Fintry, 13/4/2006, pm

- But Jesus doesn't do that - he pushes the disciples and would be disciples to make up their minds, to nail their colours to the mast.

### Lifeboat!

- Think about it this way:
  - imagine a great ship sailing across the ocean (if you've seen the movie, I suppose you can picture yourself on the Titanic...)...
  - strikes an iceberg, but the extent of the damage is not immediately clear;
  - someone starts to lower the lifeboats;
  - you are faced with a choice - stay on the doomed ship, or entrust yourself to a small, vulnerable seeming lifeboat in the middle of the ocean;
  - some folk are sure everything will be fine - the band playing on while the ship sinks around them;
  - some folk want to play safe, and get into lifeboats - but stay right alongside the doomed ship;
- There is pressure from those around you to say "it can't be that bad", or to say "play safe, keep a foot in both camps"
  - but those with clear sight see the extent of the damage and the danger, and know that the ship must be abandoned.
  - they also see that keeping the lifeboats near the doomed vessel is a recipe for disaster - for they will be dragged down by the vast bulk of the sinking liner, turned over and useless for saving life
- **The only hope is to commit yourself fully to the frail lifeboat.**
- A choice; a division - those who stay, those who go.

### Pushing the Boat out

- That same choice faces us today.
- And we should not kid ourselves that this is any less a hard teaching for us today:
  - to admit that we are utterly unable to help or save ourselves...
  - to entrust our fate to someone who demands of us everything, and is not prepared for half-hearted commitment...
- For, to continue that lifeboat analogy, our greatest danger is that we try and keep the lifeboat alongside the sinking ship:
  - we are in the lifeboat - we come to church, we've professed our faith, we put in our collection each week...
  - but our lifestyles do not reflect a 100% commitment to Jesus Christ, we are not seeking to make him Lord of our whole lives, we've not fully answered Peter's question "To whom shall we go" with his own implied answer: "There is no one else!"
  - (without bread, you're dead!)
- Yet Jesus is not confrontational as he draws his disciples into the whole-hearted commitment that is their only hope:
  - rather he is gentle, allowing them to realise the full "hardness" of his teaching in their own time, when they were ready for it...
- Likewise with us, he gently calls us to follow him each day, and waits for our response.