

Pentecost 14
August 26, 2018

John 6:60-69
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God Bless This New School Year of Christian Education!

- I. It will be “hard.”
- II. It will “offend.”
- III. It’s all about eternal life.

Dear Christian friends,

The past few weeks – on their WAY OUT of church – I’ve been asking **some** of our school children if they were READY for school to start. Not surprisingly **some** of them ARE ready – they’ve been ready for a while. **Not surprisingly** there are some who DON’T WANT school to start yet. If they could squeeze out another month of summer vacation that would be great. **Not surprisingly** I usually knew which students would answer which way!

READY or not another school year is starting. **Some** college students have already gone back. **WLA** and **Luther Prep** started last week. Our school starts on Tuesday. But let’s not stop there. Two weeks from today Sunday School and adult Bible class resume. I **earnestly pray** that those who are planning to skip Bible class will RETHINK that. I **earnestly pray** that those who have never tried Bible class will check it out. There’s ALWAYS ROOM for us grow in our **Christian faith** and our **knowledge** of God’s Word. There are always more gems to **be found** in God’s Word.

Now we turn to **this particular** part of God’s Word. We study it with an earnest prayer – GOD BLESS this new school year of Christian education! God bless this year **because** 1)it will be “hard,” 2)it will “offend” and 3)it’s all about **eternal life**.

I. It will be “hard.”

Tuesday may be the VERY FIRST day of school but it **won’t be long** and you’ll hear some whining and **complaining**. “I don’t get it! It’s TOO HARD!” **Depending** on the student that could be learning the multiplication tables – **learning all 50 states** and their capitals – **learning the books** of the Bible or the chief parts of the catechism. SOMEWHERE along the line probably every parent and **teacher** hear it – “It’s TOO HARD!”

Jesus heard that too. **“Many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching!’”** When the crowds complained, **“This is a hard teaching!”** – they weren’t whining that they DIDN’T GET what Jesus **was telling** them. It was just the OPPOSITE! They clearly understood what Jesus **was saying** but they were having a HARD TIME accepting what Jesus said **as true**. It was a **“hard teaching”** because it DIDN’T MAKE ANY SENSE to them. There was just NO WAY this could be true!

What was this **“hard teaching”**? Jesus had been repeatedly telling them 1)that He is the eternal Son of God **“come down from heaven”** to be **“the Bread of Life”** and 2)that He is the only Savior – that only by trusting in His **sacrificial death** on the cross did anyone have eternal life in heaven. The crowds understood that Jesus was claiming to be GOD IN THE FLESH. That was just too hard for them to ACCEPT. Earlier they had said, **“Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”** Now that Jesus has repeated it all over again **“many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching!’”**

As we start **another school year** how we need to pray, “Oh, GOD BLESS this year of Christian education!” There is so much in the Bible that is **“hard”** to accept because it DOESN’T MAKE **any sense** to us. Start with this that JESUS IS the Son of God in the flesh – the only Savior and way to heaven. IF **that’s true** then everybody who dies an **unbeliever** is going to hell. Yes! That the Bible

written by **sinful** human beings IS GOD'S Word completely true in **everything** it says. Yes! AND BECAUSE the Bible is **God's perfect Word** that means it doesn't need to be UPDATED and ADAPTED to our **modern** world – that when there's a difference between what GOD SAYS and what I THINK – the Bible is right and **I'm wrong!** That can be SO HARD to **accept!** PLEASE GOD – help us! Please God bless this year of Christian education because it...

II. Will also “offend.”

The people were “**grumbling**” but Jesus didn't back down one bit. Jesus didn't preach to PLEASE the crowds and be POPULAR but to proclaim the **truth**. We may not always like what **God tells us** in His Word – what God says sometimes HURTS our **feelings** and wounds our **pride** – but GOD LOVES us **too much** not to tell us the TRUTH. It's better to have HURT FEELINGS than to end up in hell **just to save** someone's pride.

As the people “**grumble**” Jesus asks them, “**Does this offend you?**” The word “**offend**” is a very strong word. It's not just that they're STUMBLING in their faith. “**Offend**” pictures this as BEING FATAL to their faith – causing them to FALL AWAY from Jesus. That is what ACTUALLY HAPPENS here. Many of these people were so upset and “**offended**” that they “**turned back and no longer followed (Jesus).**”

God's Word is OFFENSIVE to our sinful natures – to our sinful pride and **thinking**. Right here is SUCH AN IMPORTANT lesson in **Christian education** – and that includes **mission work**. God's Word offends the **unbeliever** – it offends the believer's **sinful nature** – but it is THROUGH that **very Word** that God makes and keeps us Christians! “**The flesh counts for nothing.**” Our sinful natures don't help us become or STAY Christians. We were “**dead in sin.**” Our sinful natures hate God and see God as the **enemy** – the **problem**. Our sinful nature “**does not submit to God's law nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**” Those are direct quotes from God's Word and they're not COMPLIMENTS!

It takes God the Holy Spirit to make and keep us Christians – to bring us to trust and KEEP US **trusting** in Jesus as our Savior. The Holy Spirit works and nurtures that faith THROUGH and ONLY through God's Word. “**Faith comes from hearing the message. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.**” That's why Christian education for our children and grandchildren – why a continuing Christian education for us adults – is SO VERY IMPORTANT. I probably sound like a BROKEN RECORD – there goes Pastor again – “Yes, we need to be faithfully in church – we need to come to Bible class – give our children a **solid Christian** education – read our Bibles and have those devotions at home during the week.” “**Does this offend you?**” Oh, please, God, give us all a LOVE and a HUNGER for Your Word so that we “**gladly hear and learn it**” at church and at home!

If you think this ISN'T URGENT listen again, “**From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.**” My guess is that many of us know some people who ONCE BELIEVED in Jesus but have now fallen away from Him. **Some** of those people even received a Christian education – were confirmed with us – but they don't go to church anymore – they've DRIFTED AWAY from Jesus. They're living in sin and **rather** than give up their sinful ways they GAVE UP their Savior instead. Oh please, God, BLESS Your Word that was planted in their hearts and bring them back to You! Oh, please, God, BLESS US **so that** we heed Your call to BE IN Your Word so that we can keep growing in our faith and stay close to You UNTIL You take us home to heaven.

Yes, God bless **this year** of Christian education because...

III. It's all about eternal life.

With so many “**offended**” and walking away from Him Jesus asked the twelve apostles, “**You do not want to leave too, do you?**” Jesus didn’t ask that FOR HIS OWN SAKE, “Well, at least these guys are **sticking with Me.**” Jesus asked them that question FOR THEIR sake – to encourage them to stick with Him EVEN THOUGH **so many** were giving up on Jesus.

Speaking for the twelve Peter gave that beautiful answer. “**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.**” This what Christian education and mission work are ALL ABOUT! This is why God gave Us His Word – “**that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name.**”

The **crowds** had come looking for Jesus **to give** them an EASY LIFE on earth. Jesus had something far better than that – ETERNAL life in heaven! Oh, God, please bless this year of Christian education **because** it’s all about ETERNAL LIFE in heaven! It makes absolutely NO SENSE – we’ve ignored and defied God **so many** times – told God to BUTT out and leave us alone – “we’ll do whatever we want.” God should be SO FED UP with us who can be **so stubborn** and **thick-headed** – but God STILL LOVES us. What GRACE! Oh, God shoves our sin in our face – He makes us face up to the **hell we had coming** – THEN He says, “Now let Me show you HOW I WILL **take care** of your sin so we can have a good relationship again and you can live with Me forever in heaven.”

It makes absolutely NO SENSE but hear again those **simple, familiar** gospel facts. Jesus really is the eternal Son of God born our **flesh-and-blood** Brother. Jesus took our place under God’s law and has taken care of **everything** for us – FOR ALL people. Jesus gives us ALL THE CREDIT for His life of **perfect love** and obedience to His heavenly Father. Jesus took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. Jesus endured the hell – Jesus died the death – that **fully paid** for all our sins. Three days later – AS PROMISED! – Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and He shares that victory with us. SAVOR it – REJOICE in it – never GET SICK of hearing it – **because of Jesus** God has forgiven all our sins. TRUSTING in Jesus **we have** a whole new relationship with God. Trusting in Jesus **we are going straight** to heaven when we die NO IFS, ands or buts about it. It makes absolutely NO SENSE for God to do and promise us all that – but IT’S ALL TRUE! God says so in His Word!

Oh, please, God, bless this year of Christian education and help us ever to BELIEVE and CONFESS, “**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.**” Amen.

HYMN #466