

Seedling Group Questions for the week of August 26 – Lectionary 21B

The sermon for August 26 can be found at www.saidanotherway.org

Questions for opening up

What is the best decision you've recently made? How did you make it?

If you were to go to one person for advice on every matter, who would it be (other than a spouse)?

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

What are the different components of the "armor of God"? Which ones are defensive weapons? Which ones for offensive use? Why do you think each component is described with its particular metaphor?

Other than putting on these different pieces of armor, what other actions does Paul encourage the believers to take part in? Be specific with the verbs. How might these actions help against "the rulers...the authorities...the cosmic powers of the present darkness"? What do you think he means by "the cosmic powers of the present darkness" and what does that relate to today?

Read John 6:56-69

Which teaching do Jesus' followers find so difficult to accept?

How does receiving Jesus' body and blood help someone *abide* in Christ?

Why do you think Peter and the others decide to stay with Jesus?

Putting things together

Do you think Christianity is ever presented as a "faith that gives people easy answers"? Are you tempted to believe that? Why or why not?

Pastor Phillip mentions the work of Linda Mercadonte and those who would claim to be "spiritual but not religious." Have you heard of that phrase? What do you think people mean when they use it? Do Jesus' words here in John sound more spiritual or more religious to you? Explain your answer?

Mercadonte also mentions the rise of today's "self-fulfillment morality." That is, what is good is whatever fulfills *me* in this life. Typically in this morality people are driven less to avoid guilt or shame than they are to avoid regret. (Think of the invention of "bucket lists," *carpe diem* philosophy, help other people because it makes us feel good, etc.). How does following Jesus fit (or not) into a self-fulfillment morality?

Making it personal

Off the top of your head, can you name other teachings of Jesus that are "hard to swallow"?

What kinds of things (events, practices, relationships, etc.) have been influential in your decision(s) to keep following Jesus or to stand firm in the Lord?

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

John 6:56-69

[Jesus said,] ⁵⁶“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”