

More About Jesus, Week 27: Jesus dealt with discouragement

(John 6:60-67)

by Paul Hammons

In thinking about the humanity of Jesus, one of the hardest things to grasp is that he really did endure all the things we experience in life. Jesus was the son of God, and as human as he was, it seems unimaginable that we could ever see something that Jesus experienced and say, "I can relate to that."

But all of us, at some point in time, have felt abandoned. All of us have felt disappointed that people around us are simply not listening to what we're saying - or even worse, are ashamed by what we're saying. Nothing brings more grief to a parent than to see his child turn his back on a lifetime of advice and instruction and adopting a destructive lifestyle instead. Nothing is more frustrating than seeing the foolishness in a plan, only to watch as your warnings are ignored.

And nothing discourages more than hearing people we care for say, "I don't want to hear what you have to say about any of this."

That rejection was a defining part of Jesus' final three years on this earth. John gives us one of the most dramatic examples after the miracle of the loaves, when Jesus fed 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fish. He did this not just to show his compassion for the people, but to prove to them that his teaching about God and himself was true.

But John records the reaction of the very people who had witnessed his power only a day later:

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" - Jn 6:41-42 (ESV)

When Jesus confirmed that not only was he sent from God, but that he was sent to give life in a way that was superior to what the people had received from Moses, his own disciples said, *"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"* And they *"turned back and no longer walked with him" (v. 66).*

Jesus in that moment asked the twelve, *"Do you want to go away as well?"*

While Jesus likely knew the answer to this question, there is still a hint of the frustration and discouragement we see on multiple occasions in Jesus' life.

On coming down from the mount of transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, discovering that his apostles were arguing with the crowds because they had failed to cast out a demon, he said in **Matt. 17:17**, *"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?"*

Even on his last night, as Jesus imparted his last lessons to the apostles, telling them in **John 14:7**, *"From now on, you know (the Father) and have seen him,"* and hearing Philip respond, *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us,"* Jesus asked:

"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. - Jn 14:9-11

In so many instances, Jesus rebuked his disciples, saying *"you of little faith."* At one point, he even used the same words to describe them (**Mark 8:17-18**) as he had used to describe the masses who could not understand the parables. *"Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?"*

All of us have felt let down by our friends and family at some point, but none of us have ever performed the works Jesus did, lived the righteous life he led, only to be doubted, questioned, and outright rejected by the ones he came to save.

It is to the glory of our Lord that even though discouragement no doubt affected him, he never wavered in completing the work of salvation that God had given him. While his disciples slept instead of praying for his strength and theirs, he prayed, *"Not my will, but yours."* Jesus never let the shortcomings of others distract him from serving the One who is always faithful, who always justifies our faith.

And whatever discouragement he might have felt during his life, Jesus was ultimately justified when he rose from the grave by the power of God, showing himself alive to the doubting apostles, once and for all bringing them to belief.

Jesus shows us that in overcoming discouragement, and persisting in the work of God, we will bear fruit. And God who is faithful will perform His work in us. Discouragement may come, but if we remain faithful, it will ultimately transform into victory.