

Third Sunday After the Nativity – Changing the Gospel

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
January 29, 2017
Gospel Reading: John 6:39-47*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel reading is actually the middle of a long conversation, or more precisely, a long debate between the Jews and Jesus. Jesus made the statement, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35) and repeated it many times, confusing and upsetting His listeners and even many of His disciples. Later on in the conversation, Christ says that, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood will have eternal life" (v. 54), naturally referring to Holy Communion.

After this interaction between Christ and the Jews, the Gospel tells us that "many of His disciples said this is a hard teaching, who can accept it (v. 60)? And then many of His disciples turned away and no longer followed Him. Only the twelve remained and Christ asked if they too would leave Him, to which Peter responded, "To whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life" (v. 68).

In the early days of Christianity, the Church and Christians were persecuted and accused of many things. However, the greatest and most wide spread accusation of Christians was that they were cannibals, because they said they ate and drank their Lord's Body and Blood. Yet, throughout all the persecutions, they never renounced their faith or changed their Lord's teachings.

In today's Gospel, many walked away from Christ because they did not agree with His teaching. This is an interesting event in the Gospels, but what makes it more interesting is Christ's reaction: when they disagree and don't believe, Jesus does nothing. He does not chase after them to bring them back. He does not apologize for what He said. He does not change His teachings to make His listeners feel happy or so they agree. He lets them go and continues to preach the Gospel truth.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture and society which are founded upon feelings and not the truth. We are taught from a very young age to be politically correct. If someone is offended by our words, we must immediately apologize and sometimes we must even change our words and beliefs in order to make others feel happy and comfortable. With great sadness, this ideology has also infected certain Christian denominations. Hierarchs, clergy, laity and

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even unbelievers have changed the Gospel of Christ so not to offend listeners and win members.

Today's Gospel shows us that Jesus was not concerned with feelings or coddling people, but with telling the truth. Some say that the Gospel is out of date because it was written 2,000 years ago, in a Semitic agrarian culture and is no longer applicable to the world around us. To change the Gospel means to change the Truth and to change the Truth means to change Jesus Christ. In the letter to the Hebrews it says, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forevermore" (Heb. 13:8).

There is no need to change the Gospel, we only need to change ourselves. For nearly two millennia nations, cultures, languages, armies, governments, peoples, kingdoms, and religions have risen and fallen, have appeared and disappeared, have come and gone, but the Gospel has remained the same and unchanged. Saying the Gospel needs to change in order to survive is an uneducated claim. The very fact that it has remained untouched is why we have it today.

So when we don't agree with the Church or the Gospel because it says we have to love our enemies (Mat. 5:44), forgive people who harm us (Luke 17:14) or help the poor (Mat. 19:21), we mustn't try to change it, but rather we must look within us and change ourselves. When we change ourselves, then we will be living, breathing and preaching the unchanged Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

	Minute	Length
Armenian	0:07	2:42
English	2:49	2:14
Armenian	5:03	2:04
English	7:07	1:55
Armenian	9:02	3:04
English	12:06	1:52
Conclusion	14:58	1:12
Total		16:10

Minute 7:14 →
