

There's a humorous observation about there being only two kinds of people in the world: the first is those who think that there are two kinds of people in the world, and the other is those who don't! We live in a complex world that's filled with variation, assortment, choice. I think the word is diversity nowadays. In our own way of thinking, there are all kinds of people in the world. Among our friends and families, we know of many differences— various gifts & talents, good qualities and bad, physical differences— not either/or, but shades and varieties. And so for good reason, we realize it's not always easy or advantageous to classify people as one sort or another.

It might surprise you, then, to note that spiritually speaking, according to God's Word and in God's own way of looking at people, in reality

THERE ARE ONLY TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD: BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS.

We see this distinction in today's Gospel as well as in the other readings:

Today's Psalm verses of the Introit speak of those who have good understanding and infers that there are some who do not. Our OT reading from Proverbs also speaks of two kinds of people, the wise and the foolish. This is followed up with the Epistle from Ephesians, in which Paul also speaks of people as either "unwise" or "wise." He makes a distinction that's very similar to John when he speaks of "darkness" and "light": **"For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them"** (5:8–11).

Continuing from last week's theme, Jesus proclaims in John 6 that He is the Bread of Life. Throughout the Gospel, we note the very same distinction between the two kinds of people in the world. There are those who, as believers, partake of the body and blood of Jesus, that is to say, eat His flesh and drink His blood, and in so doing, have life in them: **"So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'"** (v 53). The thought here is quite shocking. Those who will not eat and drink of Jesus' flesh and blood are spiritually dead. Moreover, those who do not *believe* this eating and drinking of Jesus' flesh and blood are dead already. Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus said: **"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."**

In our text today, Jesus says that even among His own disciples, the distinction between two types of people holds true. There are the disciples who believe Jesus and His words, and others who do not (v 64). John then brings out this contrast between two types of people by mentioning, by name and by way of contrast, Peter and Judas Iscariot. The unbelievers finally leave when Jesus proclaims the Gospel and the eating of His body and blood, and Jesus then turns to the disciples: **"Do you want to go away as well?"** (v 67). Simon Peter answered him, in the words of the Alleluia sung before the reading of the Holy Gospel in the Divine Service: **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"** (v 68). Peter continues: **"And we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."**

In sharp contrast to his naming Peter, Jesus does not name Judas, but only calls him "a devil" (v 70). This contrast is made to illustrate that the believer is righteous, has life, receives forgiveness of sins, and is invited to partake of Jesus Himself in the meal that He will institute on the eve of His own death.

Much emphasis in the Church is placed on mission work. After all, our Lord has given us the Great Commission. If we take seriously the distinction that Jesus is making between believers and unbelievers, then mission work must be a priority of the Church - to share the Gospel with them so that the Holy Spirit

can move them from a state of unbelief to belief, that they might have life. This has always been the Church's mandate. That is why the church from the time of Christ has sent missionaries.

However, if we hear John's Gospel carefully, we note that the Father gives the believer grace to believe. **"The Spirit gives life."** One does not "decide" or "choose" in themselves to believe. Why not? Because they cannot! In last week's Reading from the first half of John 6, we note that Jesus says those who are believers in the first place are those the Father gives to him (v 37). Several verses later, the point is made more strongly: **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day"** (v 44). Today's Reading repeats this truth concerning the nature of the Church's mission: **"And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father'"** (v 65). The one kind of people, unbelievers, can never make themselves believers.

Neither, surprisingly, can the other kind of people, believers. No believer—or pastor—is called to convert an unbeliever. As odd as that sounds at first, it is in keeping with the teaching of the Scriptures. The Church's mandate is to proclaim the Good News about Jesus and invite people to repent of their sins and to believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. But it's the work of the Holy Trinity to create and bestow faith on all who believe; it's not a matter of manipulation, clever marketing techniques, or appeals for people to "decide to follow Jesus," as one popular revivalist hymn suggests.

A perfect example of this point is the way Paul proclaimed the Gospel to the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17:15–34. Paul was invited to bring his message before these philosophers on Mars Hill. He simply proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ and that God raised him up from the dead. A few believed, while most did not. Paul was not much of a success by this world's standards; nevertheless, he was faithful to the calling God had given to him to proclaim Jesus.

Later, Paul would write to the Corinthians that "the natural [unspiritual] person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). No one can believe in Jesus Christ in and of themselves. The Holy Spirit creates faith through the Word, and specifically through the Gospel. Luther conveys this clearly in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" (Luther's Small Catechism, p 17). "I believe that by nature I'm of the one kind of people, an unbeliever, and I couldn't make myself the other kind. But the Holy Spirit has done that!"

Inviting people to church to come and hear of Jesus is being a faithful witness to Christ. That is exactly what Andrew did, as John records earlier in his Gospel (Jn 1:40–42). And that is exactly what we are called to do. We want everyone to become the other kind of people, to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. If they do not they will spend eternity in hell.

Jesus presents Himself before you this morning in His Word. Jesus tells us that in the preaching of the Word as it creates and sustains faith in us, we are eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and that in so doing we are receiving the forgiveness of our sins. Many are as offended by this today just as those who heard him centuries ago when Jesus first spoke these words. He asks us as He did them: **"Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God'"** (vv 67–69).