

## **Bennochy church: 26<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

*"When the going gets tough, the tough get going".* I wonder if that is us? Revelling in the challenge, or do we simply want the quiet life? Are we up for change, or is the 'status quo' what we seek in life? When we don't understand, or when others decide it is not for them, which way do we go? Do we stay the course to the end, or do we change direction and drift away? Do we feel the pressure of the crowd or can we stand alone?

For the crowd listening to Jesus, following the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, his teaching had become too hard. Who can listen to this? Jesus, the carpenter's son from Nazareth, is he saying that he is the Son of man? And what is all this about eating flesh and drinking blood? He talks about the real bread from heaven, eternal life and life giving spirit. We are confused. It was all too much for the crowd! By the lake side, this 1<sup>st</sup> century Divinity lecture contained too much 'heavy' theology!

Knowing exactly what they were thinking, he says to the crowd, *'does this make you want to give up?'* We have all been there. Those moments in life where it has all

become too hard and we just want to give up. All we can see are the problems with no answers, and the difficulties that wrap around us like a heavy and dark cloud, obscuring any hope for the future. We have been in those difficult situations. We have been the crowd around Jesus.

Unlike many of the crowd, Jesus does not give up, even though he knows many of them will not believe. I suspect that Jesus is thinking; even if they saw me raised to heaven they would not believe. If they are struggling with what I am saying now, how will they cope with, accept and believe in resurrection!

The crowd are coming at this from the perspective of human understanding and a literal interpretation of the flesh and blood that Jesus is talking about, and not in the power that comes from God alone. *"What gives life is God's Spirit; human power is of no use at all. The words I have spoken to you bring God's life-giving Spirit."* (63)

Jesus is saying that people are not drawn to God by miracles alone, nor by human power, but by God himself. These words must draw out of us any thought that we

can come to God by what we bring, our work, our effort or even our devotion. Life might tempt us to think that can do it alone, but that is not the truth of Jesus words.

So the crowd have come so far, witnessed the miracle and heard the words of Jesus, but now many of them turn their back on him. We might be thinking; we would not do that! Think of the privilege of listening first hand to the words of Jesus, witnessing his miracles and having him physically in their midst and still many would not go with him any further.

Jesus now turns to his 12 disciples. Up to this point the spotlight has not been on them. Have they been part of this conversation or just listening in from the margins? Now it is their turn. *'What about you, do you also want to leave?'* Put yourself in their shoes, you have been listening in to this encounter over the past week weeks, and now Jesus turns to you. *'What about you, do you also want to leave?'* Do you drift away with the crowd or stand with Simon Peter, (v68)

It is only when we are 'put on the spot' in life, by the crisis, question, choice or decision, does the challenge of

such questions become reality for our lives. When that happens, we will wander off, or stand in faith

So ends Jesus encounter with the crowds by Lake Galilee. It is now a smaller crowd. We are not told how many left, but I suspect it was many and now around Jesus is the few who continue to believe.

The journey is hard and the way is narrow, but if we recognise life, where else would we go? If we recognise truth, why would we not wish to hang around Jesus? If we have discovered the way, why journey to a different destination?

We have stuck with Christ; let us journey together with him, in faith, in hope and always with perseverance. Amen.