

# Sunday, August 22, 2021

## Lectionary 21, Year B

### Introduction

In today's gospel many people take offense at Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus' disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John's gospel for Peter's confession of faith. "To whom can we go?" asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. "You have the words of eternal life." In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.

### Prayer of the Day

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

### First Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

*In the Near East, covenant means "agreement" or "alliance." It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.*

<sup>1</sup>Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. <sup>2a</sup>And Joshua said to all the people, <sup>14</sup>"Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served

in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

<sup>16</sup>Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup>for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; <sup>18</sup>and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

## **Psalm 34:15-22**

*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous. (Ps. 34:15)*

- <sup>15</sup>The eyes of the Lord are up- | on the righteous,  
and God’s ears are open | to their cry.
- <sup>16</sup>**The face of the Lord is against those | who do evil,  
to erase the remembrance of them | from the earth.**
- <sup>17</sup>The righteous cry, and | the Lord hears them  
and delivers them from | all their troubles.
- <sup>18</sup>**The Lord is near to the | brokenhearted  
and saves those whose spir- | its are crushed. R**
- <sup>19</sup>Many are the troubles | of the righteous,  
but the Lord delivers them from | every one.
- <sup>20</sup>**God will keep safe | all their bones;  
not one of them | shall be broken.**
- <sup>21</sup>Evil will bring death | to the wicked  
and those who hate the righteous | will be punished.
- <sup>22</sup>O Lord, you redeem the life | of your servants,  
and those who put their trust in you will | not be punished. **R**

## **Second Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20**

*Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual*

*warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.*

<sup>10</sup>Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For 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. <sup>13</sup>Therefore 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. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. <sup>15</sup>As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup>Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>18</sup>Pray 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. <sup>19</sup>Pray 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, <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

## **Gospel: John 6:56-69**

*The "hard saying" that offends Jesus' disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: "To whom shall we go?"*

[Jesus said,] <sup>56</sup>"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup>Just as the living Father sent me, and I live

because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup>This 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.” <sup>59</sup>He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

<sup>60</sup>When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>But 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. <sup>65</sup>And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.”

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