

26-0329a - Detailed Summary

26-0329a - *To Whom Shall We Go?* Tom Freed

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and Roger Raines

This detailed summary by Grok, xAI, (Transcription by TurboScribe.ai)

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To Whom Shall We Go?

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:59): Mike Mathis

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: The first scripture reader, Mike, reads from John 6:66-69. It describes how many of Jesus' disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. Jesus then asks the Twelve if they also want to go away. Simon Peter replies, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

2nd Reading (1:04 - 1:51): Roger Raines

Philippians 2:5-8: The second scripture reader, Roger, reads from 1 John 2:15-17. He warns, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The passage explains that everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life—comes from the world and not from the Father. It concludes that the world and its lust are passing away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 23:20), Preacher: Tom Freed

(1:56 - 3:34) Sermon Introduction and Imagined Thriving Church

Preacher Tom begins his sermon titled "To Whom Shall We Go?" He notes the preaching rotation and invites those who dislike his style to return next week for someone else. He asks the congregation to imagine a vibrant Sunday morning: families excitedly heading to church, only to find the parking lot full, requiring parking blocks away. A school bus arrives filled with children singing worship songs loudly. Classrooms overflow with children, and the auditorium is standing-room-only with 250 to 300 people packed shoulder to shoulder.

The bulletin lists various classes on marriage, family, biblical finances, and Christian living. The entire building buzzes with energy and excitement as friends, family, elders, deacons, and visitors gather.

(3:36 - 6:10) This Congregation's Past Glory and Decline

Tom explains that the described scene was not from a megachurch movie but reflected this very congregation just 25 or 30 years ago. Many present witnessed the thriving period when the church considered knocking out the back wall to add more pews due to the large crowds. About half the current congregation may remember those days.

He contrasts this with today's smaller gathering and poses the question: what happened and where did everybody go? Reasons for departure include painful leadership struggles and failures that caused deep rifts, members leaving for other Churches of Christ or denominations, the impact of the pandemic, and the passing of dear brothers and sisters. Honestly, many turned away from the Lord and walked back into the world. Tom notes that nothing is new under the sun, as thousands of years ago many of Jesus' disciples did the same.

(6:12 - 7:42) Jesus' Ministry Peak and Shift to Hard Truths

The sermon draws a parallel to Jesus' ministry in John 6. Just 24 hours earlier, Jesus fed over 5,000 people (plus women and children) with five loaves and two fish. The crowd witnessed Him walk on water and wanted to crown Him king by force. However, Jesus shifted from providing free bread to declaring hard truths: "I am the bread of life" and "whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."

The listeners, misunderstanding the spiritual meaning as cannibalism, began to murmur that this was a hard saying and questioned who could listen to it (John 6:60). The tone changed dramatically from excitement to rejection.

(7:45 - 11:15) Pattern of Walking Away During Hard Times

Tom observes that many who had called Jesus "rabbi" the day before turned and walked away. This pattern repeats in churches today: when seats are packed and excitement is high, everything feels wonderful. But when hard truths are spoken or difficult times arrive, many depart.

Christians experience smooth seasons, but trials inevitably test them. Peter warns in 1 Peter 4:12 not to be surprised by fiery trials. Hard times include struggles with sin, broken relationships, serious illness, loss of loved ones, or failures in the church or personal life.

The key question is how one responds when the road gets difficult—will we walk away like many others, or remain faithful to Christ? Jesus turns to His inner circle of twelve and asks piercingly, "Do you also want to go away?" He does not soften the message but simply asks if they will stay.

(11:17 - 15:18) Peter's Powerful Response and Reasons for Departure

Simon Peter's answer in John 6:68 is raw and honest: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This response remains equally true today—there is nowhere else worth going.

People leave Christ and His church for various reasons. Some chase worldly pleasures without guilt or accountability, like Demas who loved this present world and deserted the faith (2 Timothy 4:10). They resent being told what to do and want to sin without consequence.

Others leave due to deep wounds from hypocrisy, harsh legalism, broken relationships, or leadership failures and sins by preachers that created rifts. The congregation has felt such pain.

Still others depart when facing hard teachings on suffering, sexuality, hell, the problem of evil, personal tragedy, or prolonged illness, often blaming God with questions like "If God is so good, why this?"

In our connected age, cultural pressures, new ideas from college, the internet, or friends make alternative worldviews seem more appealing than Christ's narrow way. Christianity is often mocked in schools and society.

At the root, many simply fall in love with the world, as warned in 1 John 2:15-17: the desires of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life are not from the Father but from the world, which is passing away. These offer temporary pleasure, self-fulfillment, and comfort but cannot satisfy the soul.

(15:19 - 19:15) No Better Alternative and Words of Eternal Life

Despite many reasons for leaving, none challenge Peter's fundamental question: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Peter had examined the religious options—Pharisees with rules, Sadducees with skepticism, Essenes with isolation, Zealots with violence—and found them all bankrupt. Today's marketplace of ideas is even louder.

Science explains how the universe works but not why we exist or what happens after death. Self-help systems admit one cannot truly fix oneself. Pleasure fades, leaving emptiness. Politics has never saved a single soul. Like Solomon, who found all pursuits vanity, Peter concluded there is nowhere else.

The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Jesus offers what no alternative can.

Peter's second statement is powerful: "You have the words of eternal life." He did not mention good feelings or inspiration but eternal life. Jesus' words are spirit and life (John 6:63). They declare forgiveness ("Your sins are forgiven," Mark 2:5), relationship ("You are my friend," John 15:15), resurrection and hope ("I am the resurrection and the life," John 11:25), peace in storms (John 14:27), mission (Matthew 28:19), and eternal security (John 10:28).

These words impart eternal life, planting something death cannot destroy.

Comparing options: the world offers opinions while Jesus offers truth; pleasures versus sacrifice leading to joy; self-reliance versus surrender; self-actualization versus transformation; temporary happiness versus eternal joy; comfort versus the cross and then the crown.

(19:16 - 21:50) Application: Expect Desertions, Examine Heart, Cling to Scripture, Help Others

When the crowd left, Peter stayed—not because it was easy, but because he had nowhere better. Applications for today include:

First, expect desertions. Jesus warned the gate is narrow and the way hard, with few finding it (Matthew 7:14). Grieve departures but do not lose confidence in Christ.

Second, examine your own heart. If wondering whether to walk away, hear Jesus asking personally, "Do you want to go away as well?" First ask Peter's question—there are no real alternatives.

Third, cling to Jesus' words. In doubt, grief, or cultural pressure, return to Scripture—read, memorize, and speak it. These are spirit and life.

Fourth, become a peer to others drifting away. Gently ask, "Where else are you going to go?" and point them back to Jesus.

(21:53 - 23:20) Peter's Full Story and Final Invitation

Peter's confession was not the end. He later denied Jesus three times, needed restoration by the Sea of Galilee, and died a martyr's death—crucified upside down, unwilling to die like his Lord. Yet even after failure, Peter never revisited "to whom shall we go?" He had settled it.

Today the same Lord asks each person, "Do you want to go away as well?"

The invitation is extended: If never trusted Him, hear "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). If wandered, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). If heart grown cold, "Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22).

If like Peter you have found nowhere better, declare with your life: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The front is open for responses—becoming a Christian, recommitting, or seeking prayers—as the congregation stands and sings.