

Choose this Day

Sermon 2018-08-26 - Year B - Pentecost 8-21 - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas
Joshua 24:1–2a, 14–25; Psalm 16; Ephesians 5:21–33; John 6:60–69

Decisions

- We are blessed to live in a country where we get to make a lot of decisions for ourselves. This is a part of what freedom means for many of us.
 - We get to choose our leaders. We get to choose where we will live. We get to choose which job to accept. We get to choose how we will spend our money.
- It is a blessing to be able to decide for ourselves, but this blessing can also be a curse when we make bad decisions or choose things that aren't good for us.
 - Magnesium burn on the countertop
- In the Gospel passage that we just read, we heard about some people who had been following Jesus but decided to turn away.

Barriers to Following Jesus

- v. 60 "This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?"
- This was the reaction of some of Jesus' disciples upon hearing some of Jesus' teaching.
 - discussed last week, listen on our website if you are curious!
- There are lots of reasons why we might be offended by the message of the Gospel. Many of these reasons have to do with our lifestyle, and our desire to keep doing things that we enjoy, things which we might fear we would have to give up to follow Jesus.
 - There are some things that we might need to change in our lives to follow Jesus, but too often people think that the Bible is against fun and the enjoyment of life. This couldn't be further from the truth!
- Some might see the moral teaching of the Bible to be burdensome and may see it as interfering with their freedom and autonomy.
- Another reason we might react this way is because the message of Jesus brings us face to face with the wrongdoing in our lives and reminds us that we are not as "good" as we think we are.
 - We tend to think of "goodness" in relative terms, comparing ourselves to others.
 - "I'm not as bad as Hitler or a Mafia hitman, so I must be pretty good."
 - God thinks of goodness in absolute terms, and we all fall short of it.
 - A tiny bit of pigment colors the whole can of paint
 - Romans 3:23 "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

What other options are there?

- v. 68 "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life..."
- The blessing of Jesus is that he is the the one good option among countless bad ones.
 - Slow to anger and quick to forgive - Exodus 34:6
 - He loves us and he will never leave us (faithfulness) - Exodus 34:6
 - Think about the best, most loving marriage you have ever observed.

- He has our best interests in mind
- He wants us to have abundant life! - John 10:10
- There is really only one good option. His name is Jesus.
- Let's talk about forgiveness a bit more. Earlier we said that all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Hear the rest of that passage: Romans 3:24-25.
 - Jesus is able to forgive us, and to put us back into relationship with God, because he has taken the punishment that we deserve.
 - But there is a decision to make. We have to choose to invite him into our lives.

What will you choose?

- Joshua 24:15 "...choose this day whom you will serve..."
- Joshua was recognizing that there were other options, other gods that the people could serve. He knew that they were not good options, they were not even real options (because they were false gods), but they were options nonetheless, and thus a decision had to be made. They couldn't have it both ways.
- Today there are still other religions that we can choose, and there are also the gods and idols of our own day, things like money, sex, addictions, power, and anything else we might choose to elevate over God and put in his place. These are not good options, but they are options nonetheless, and thus a decision has to be made.
- It is a lie to say that all religions are paths to the same place. Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
 - All other roads lead to a place of our choosing, a place where we are eternally separated from God, a place also known as Hell.
- Deep down our hearts long for God, we were made for him, and we will be restless and unsatisfied until we find our way safely to him. And yet, we so often continue to try to satisfy ourselves with things that can't satisfy.
 - Imagine being thirsty on a hot day and trying to quench your thirst with a glass full of dirt!
- Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."
- Only you can make the decision whether to open the door and let Jesus come in.
- Choose this day whom you will serve. I don't know about you, but in the words of Joshua, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (v. 15)

Prayer of Repentance and Faith

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess my faults, shortcomings, sins, and rebellious acts, and ask you to forgive me. I embrace you, Lord Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for your atoning death on the cross in obedience to your Father's will to put away my sins. I enthrone you, Lord Jesus, to be in charge of every part of my life, and I ask you to indwell and empower me with your Holy Spirit, so that I may live as your faithful follower from now on. Amen.¹

¹ *To be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*