

It All Comes Down to Choice

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time- June 26, 2016

We make choices every day of our lives. Some are significant choices, others are not. We choose which brand of cereal to purchase. We drive through the fast-food line or choose to dine at a more health conscious location. We choose which brand of car defines our true self. We decide on choices in beer, coffee, politics, fabric softener, and dish soap. Some choices determine our lives and the relationships we build. In looking at the gospel this week, the choice is all about Jesus Christ and the difficult decision that lies before those who wish to follow him.

We are now at the point in the gospel where Jesus has realized that the prediction made in last week's gospel about his death is a choice for him as well. **"When the days for Jesus being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and sent his messengers ahead of him."** The only thing that awaits him in Jerusalem is death. He knows this truth. He knows that his mission to proclaim the love and mercy of God has not set well with the powers that be. Jesus could have decided to run as fast and as far in the opposite direction as possible. He makes a very distinctive choice to move toward Jerusalem. Along the way he is met with resistance.

Entering into a Samaritan village he is faced with a lack of hospitality. Those in the village **"would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem."** The lack of hospitality infers the fact that Jesus' message was not received by all. There was tension between religious sects then as there is now. Differences in culture, race, and status have separated the human race since our first parents made the choice to go against the will of God in the Garden of Eden. Jesus' mission, to proclaim a world free of these divisions, has not been fully accepted.

James and John's reaction to the lack of welcome is a desire to call down the wrath of God upon the village. Their choice would have been to destroy what was not like them. Jesus will not accept violence as a means to resolve differences. Rather, Jesus makes the non-violent choice to move on to another town along the way.

Faced with the choice to follow Jesus, three different individuals give varied responses. One promises to follow him everywhere. Jesus understands this to be shallow promise as Jesus explains, **"Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."** The life of the Christian will call for hardship, sacrifice and a detachment from the material world. Another asked to follow once he has buried his father. The third indicates his loyalty once he has bid farewell to his family.

Jesus' response seems harsh. However, Jesus is saying that this is the most important choice we can make. We must surrender to the Truth that God must come before even our family, those we love. In doing so, we place our choice on the one who can most help us embrace the hardship of a parent's death or the fact that this earthly life is incomplete.

We will not find our deepest longing in the choices we make concerning cereal, cars or iPhones. Rather, our deepest longing, the meaning of life, is a choice to place before all other things a life in Christ. Our lives will become richer and fuller because our choice is to live for an eternal life with God.

Blessings!



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