

Verse 15 of Joshua 24, sets the tone for what follows: "choose *this day* whom you will serve." Today, I would ask that you think about "difficult choices."

When you make choices, how do you do it? ? Do you anguish or do you just react without thinking? Do you ask for help or are you frustrated when someone else makes tough calls for you? Just think how many difficult choices you make over the course of a week. Consider why choices that seem difficult for you are easy for others; or choices you find easy cause others to simply be amazed at "how you do it?"

But making a choice only **begins the journey!!! The follow through is even more difficult!** For instance, I always promised to do my chores as a kid, but then could quickly find excuses not to. Marriage vows promise oneness until death, but then an argument or a distraction causes us to forget. We are comfortable with our income until we hear what someone else is making.

Difficult as choices might be ... living with them is even more so! At Sinai Moses said, "no other gods!" And Israel chose well, until they met their pagan neighbors, and choices got difficult. Many would be disciples promised to "follow Jesus!" Until their good intentions were erased by the difficulty of the journey ahead.

And so it goes, day after day after day. In the Gospel we just heard there was a wonderful line that went like this, "this is a hard saying! Who can accept it?"

Jesus talked about himself like manna from heaven – eat my body! And that caused some disciples to change their minds and head home! We assume that a literal interpretation of Jesus words was the problem, but more likely there was a reluctance to allow Jesus to take control of my life? (Is it any different or easier for us?)

Peter had to decide whether to fish or follow. Matthew whether to collect or spend. And each of us gets caught in same reality of discipleship ever day!

This is the point of Jesus words about bread of life (his body and blood.) His gift of cross and tomb are a sacrifice to empower us no matter what! In all these texts we are reminded Jesus is FOOD! All the nourishment and life we could ever need!

In Joshua 24, Israel was poised a riverbank between two worlds; and their choice was not about desert or lush gardens, but rather who would they follow "as God?"

Once they crossed the river there would be no turning back. It didn't seem to be that tough a choice, but what would they do when they had to live with others, face distractions of pagan gods, and have to work for dally bread instead of gathering simply gathering manna? They were comfortable with their old life, what would happen now?

At Baptism we promise to teach our children, to worship with our children, to help them grow in God's grace. But when they are fussy in worship, or I am too tired to get up, or my stomach is rumbling for a bagel and it is time for a Bible class, what do I choose?

Sure I am a Christian, but when it comes to sacrificial giving, or intentional outreach, then I cry out "THIS IS HARD TO SWALLOW, WHO CAN DO IT?" Paul always says faith is a choice about surrender – faith means not looking back!

Bill Moyers asked Sister Wendy (of PBS art fame) "how do you know where to start in art museum?" She said the point is not to be the smartest or know art perfectly; *the point is to simply be ALIVE! Look, visit and let the art work on you.*

Our reality is that we don't chose Jesus-he has already chosen us! Our choice is whether we remain or run. Live by faith or doubt. Be confident or second guess?

The commitment of discipleship is like a diet; it works only if you stick to it! It is like a marriage; it blossoms only if you are committed to it! The hard choice has been made at Calvary and tomb, sometimes we make our response more difficult than it need be, an when we look at what Christ has gotten out of the way, what is our problem – really?.

Yes, this "is a hard saying." That is why Easter is given before we chose anything! *Aren't all choices easier when someone else gets the difficult ones out of the way?*

Yogi Berra said, "when you come to a fork in the road, take it!?! Sometimes we feel that is about all the help we get with choices. But think about this quote in terms of choices we make "by faith." There often aren't easy and clear answers, but when we know that whatever fork we choose, Christ walks that path with us, why would we ever be afraid to move on? When you come to choices, make one – and when it is in the context of faith, much of the "heavy lifting" has already been done for you!

Just let go! Don't look back. Move forward! Have no fear! Christ has already chosen us, so no matter where we go ... He never lets go! Or as Paul says, "Be strong and put on the armor of God!"

As we remember the choices he has made for us – why would we ever walk anywhere except with him? And that, my friends, is why we can say, "Go in peace!"