

## **SERMON – Pentecost 13 -2021**

TEXTS: John 6:56-69  
Joshua 24:14-18  
Ephesians 6:10-13

Grace, mercy and peace be with you from God...the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reflecting on the Scripture readings appointed for this Sunday presents a challenge for me. The texts are magnificent – crammed with God’s words of wisdom – so, I said to myself, why should these great texts be relegated to a Sunday in August...a Sunday that traditionally (even before Covid) would have a smaller audience. Possibly a blessing of this year is that some more folk may be participating in this time of Worship via Zoom and Facebook.

Then, I said to myself, where to begin????

Answering this question, I thought of the obvious --- begin at the end!

“So Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Do you also wish to go away?’” Jesus found that many who had been following Him --- was it just because they had had their stomachs filled? --- decided to leave when He began to teach in Capernaum’s synagogue.

This is the finale of the “Bread” texts from John’s Gospel. The feasting concludes with people leaving...“This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” People were making a choice. They could not accept that Jesus was offering them the gift of life, the gift of himself. We may also find this teaching a difficult one...at least on some days, at some times.

The people in Capernaum that day made a choice. The twelve apparently were in the minority!

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel – all 12 tribes – the elders, the heads, the judges and the officers. Joshua tells them that they all have a choice to make: “Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve...”. People, standing before the Lord, remembered that it was the Lord who had brought them, as a people, out of bondage – protecting and providing for them in the Exodus Journey – and they responded: “We also will serve the Lord, for the Lord is our God.”

The letter to the Ephesians draws on the imagery of a soldier preparing to go to battle. Paul urges the people to choose to put on all the armor of God... “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.” The battle is against evil. Recognizing the enormity of the task, the question raised by Jesus might once again beg to be answered: “Do you also wish to go away?”

Again – here is a choice – but sometimes a choice is not a choice at all. What do I mean?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. remarked in his autobiography: “Of course I was religious. I grew up in the church. My father is a preacher, my grandfather was a preacher, my great-grandfather was a preacher, my only brother is a preacher, my daddy’s brother is a preacher. So I didn’t have much choice”. This was choice in a personal dimension, and it resulted in a choice for the common good.

The Israelites who were summoned together by Joshua made a choice for the community...a common decision. They remembered God’s faithfulness. Still today our Hebrew sisters and brothers gather at the table and remember...and they celebrate life.

As a community of faith, Trinity has made choices for the good of the community. Masks, distancing --- for the good of the community. Receiving vaccinations if at all possible --- a choice for the good of the community.

Now, you may ask, what does all this have to do with the question Jesus put to the 12 when so many of those who followed him decided that this teaching in Capernaum’s synagogue was just too difficult?

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” Is this too difficult? We gather at the table, not as close to one another as in past days, but gathered together in one meal. Take and eat, this is my body....take and drink this is my blood. Taste and see the goodness of God.

Choose God who comes to us to give life. Choose to serve the Lord. Choose to live in community, for the benefit of all.

It was a tough day for Jesus as the truth was proclaimed in Capernaum. “So Jesus asked the twelve, ‘Do you also wish to go away?’” Simon Peter responded for the 12: “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

Jesus you are the living word, you are eternal life. We gather at the table – fed and nourished. Choosing to live – in the Body of Christ, in and for community.

Amen.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.