

DO YOU WISH ME TO GO AWAY ?

Deacon Colleen

Homily August 26/27, 2006

When I read the scriptures for the week, I expect stuff to jump out at me – what is it I am to take home with me, what is it that will fill up my empty spiritual gas tank – what is it God that you would have me know?

Not too much different than the voices of the disciples that we hear today in our scriptures. Jesus has just finished a recitation to them – the ole I am the bread of life story – who has my flesh & my blood will have life – well, this can be a confusing way to think to the followers in Jesus' time, and sometime it's not real clear to me either, at least I am not willing to chose it.

I fear that not really too much has changed in all these years. If Jesus were to appear at Grace Church today, and give us the same talking-to pep talk he gave to his followers, I feel pretty certain there would be whining and questions and many many doubts. And I am sure Jesus would be Jesus , “Does this offend you”? he might say. The words I have spoken to you are spirit, and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe, and many have turned back and no longer follow him.

I wonder if we don't turn back regularly from our God. It can be a foggy road, that's for sure – why would we choose to be in a fog when there are many other choices, clearer choices even? Why look at those roads, I can see up ahead quite a bit, it's predictable, why not go that way? Who would blame me? It's much easier.

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Jesus knew that there were those who would not believe him and there were many that would betray him. “No one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father”, God’s desire for you and me is greater than our desire for God.

It may be only by divine inspiration that we turn to God, but this inspiration is offered to everyone. The difference is that there are those who close their hearts to God’s invitation. Still today many followers of faith abandon their own God.

Joshua’s reading today describes a choice. Joshua challenges the Israelites to “choose this day whom you will serve”. Likewise the disciples are asked, “Do you also wish to go away?”

For Joshua’s household there’s not a doubt, “as for this house we will serve the Lord.” The scene is a covenant renewal service where Joshua is speaking to a crowd and this is not only a personal commitment but also a call to a community to pick their path, their road – serving the Lord is in fact a communal decision.

And it’s also true today, here in our church family, as we worship together, receive communion from the same table, embrace each other in peace, as a small gathering or larger group,

We hope when we make a commitment in our lives to follow Jesus that we come to a church that also is made up of others who have made that

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personal decision, a decision that CHANGES them in some way, a way in which all those changed or wanting to be changed people gather together to make things different, to make a contribution to the greater good, to reach out to the injustices of the world, and together as a people of faith create SOMETHING.

Joshua gives hints – “yield your hearts”, “serve him with all your faithfulness” And in the Psalm we hear, , “I will praise the Lord who counsels me.” “You have assigned me my portion & my cup,” and “my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.”

So this thing called faith, this presence and gift called spirit, in the end really all choices. If we are quiet, very very quiet we can hear Jesus – Do you wish to go away?

Another hint and food for thought from scripture today, from John’s Gospel, “The Spirit gives life – the flesh counts for nothing.”

So, yes, maybe it is all about choices, but what goes round comes round, while we are given the gift of choosing by a loving and patient God, Jesus offered the disciples a choice, “Do you wish to go away,” No matter though, the condition of our faith is really of no importance to God to make his choice, while we may choose to walk away, to turn our back on what we know is true and sustaining, and good for us, no matter what, his choice is ALWAYS to stay with us.