



August 22, 2021

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life..." John 6:68

Dear Friends;

Have you ever gotten into the car and started heading in a direction out of habit only to realize that you needed to go in the opposite direction. Sometimes we are so habituated in acting and thinking in certain ways that it takes a focused conscious effort to move in a new direction. Both Joshua and Jesus invite us to consciously decide on the direction in which we wish to go in life. Some will have trouble moving in the direction in which they want to lead us.

Every day we make numerous little decisions: what should I wear? What will I have for lunch? Will I call a friend today? Will I go to the grocery store or bank or take a walk? What time should I leave to pick up the kids at school? Sometimes we are asked to make bigger decisions: for whom should I vote? Is it time to change jobs or move the family? Should we get married? Is it time to retire?

Then there are a few times where we stand at the crossroads. We are called to make a critical choice that will permanently change the direction of our lives. From these kinds of choices there can be no turning back.

Today, Joshua gathers all the tribes of Israel and tells them, *"Decide whom you will serve,"* the gods of your ancestors or the gods of the land in which we are settling? Then he proclaims the decision he has made, *"As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."* Joshua warns them that once they make this decision there is no turning back. The people recall all that God had done for them bringing them out of Egypt to the Land of the Promise. They choose to serve the Lord.

In our passage from John's Gospel, Jesus has been teaching about the compassionate generosity of God. He corrected the commonly held belief that it was Moses who gave them the manna/bread from Heaven. Jesus tells them that it was God, not Moses, who gave them the bread. Manna was only temporary nourishment. He tells them that he and his teaching are the real bread from Heaven. This was more than many of them could take and many walk away from Jesus. They were used to going in another direction. Then Jesus asks the Twelve the critical question of their own life commitment. Simon Peter responds in love, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."* His choice is made. Done!

Sometimes the Israelites and the Apostles wavered and failed in their commitment. But God who is always faithful never abandons them. God constantly and lovingly calls them to live up to their full potential. They must embody the justice, compassion and peace of the Kingdom of God.

There are fires raging all over the planet from California, Oregon, Canada, and Greece. Increasingly there are powerful storms and record floods in China, Texas and Europe. The planet groans and people fight climate science. Authoritarian populism and white supremacism is taking hold of fearful people flailing for help. Laws, which seek to suppress minority votes, threaten democratic institutions in order to preserve the privileges of the few. Fundamentalist religion and extremist politics supplies easy answers to complex questions. Our obsession with guns and military power only offer us ceaseless violence. The ever increasing gap between the wealthy few and the multitudes of poor destabilizes society. The pandemic worsens because there are those who feel their personal choices matter more than the health of everyone else. These ideologies proclaim themselves more important than people and the planet.

We are now at an important crossroad in history. God is inviting us to make a decision. Who will we serve? Will it be the gods of greed, radical individualism, competition, and chaos? Or will we serve the God of compassion and mercy who knows how to nourish all his children with the Bread of Eternal Life? Will we choose to heal the planet? Will we value all people? Will we cherish all the creatures of the earth? Time is short, we must decide now!

Peace,

Ft Ron