

Choices

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you. Choices. I thought I'd spend a moment with choices.
- ! We all make so many choices from lots of little ones every single day.! What we'll have for dinner, what we'll wear.
- We make lots of fun choices, what movies to watch. Gifts to buy, have a day out. Then every so often we have those big mighty choices.
- Where to invest, jobs to take, homes to move to university and all such things. And then, then there are those choices we either deliberately or perhaps naturally make dependent on our personality.
- What political party to support, what media to listen to, what we believe with regards to faith, God, creation, evil and so on and so on. And the outcome of all our choices, bit by bit, build a picture of who we really are.
- [1 : 2 0] And whether for good or for bad, they do affect us. Then, of course, there is another system of choice.
- Where we don't actually get to choose. But again, whether for good or bad, they do affect us. They are, of course, the choices made by others.
- These, of course, range from the small and gentle to the big and horrific. For example, it was only a few years ago that Putin made his choice to launch full scale in Ukraine.
- Ultimately, ultimately affecting millions of lives across Russia and Ukraine, but also affecting our lives. As energy prices soared, the security focus changed.
- His choice, Putin's choice, affected all of us. Then, on a local, perhaps friendlier level, in the last few years, Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh have all introduced these low emission, no drive zones, ultimately affecting all of our lives.
- [2 : 3 7] Changing how and why and when we travel. But also, perhaps, aiding and helping a future of cleaner air. However, the choices made by others in positions of power, ultimately, whether for good or bad, affect us.
- Did you notice, by any chance, what Jesus proclaimed in verse 22 here? In verse 22, Jesus proclaims clearly for everyone to see that he had made a choice.
- A choice that would ultimately have an everlasting and an eternal effect upon humanity forever to come.
- He made a choice that he, the Son of Man, must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, teachers of the law.
- And that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Many months before the event arrives, Jesus clearly tells the twelve, He will be rejected, he will be rejected, he will suffer, he will be killed, he will rise again.
- [4 : 1 9] And in doing so, he proclaims that in advance, he has already made the choice to go through with it. He's already decided and chosen, he will go.

When they come and take me, I'm going. I've chosen to go, he's saying. Why? Why exactly? Well, journey with me through some key points of Jesus' very final choices, which may help explain why.

Palm Sunday, for instance, when Jesus so boldly and courageously chooses to do the one thing that will simply push the envy and jealousy and strife of those Pharisees, elders and teachers of the law he mentions.

The one thing that will push them over the limit. For to enter Jerusalem in full royal fashion on a donkey attracting thousands to fall at his feet and worship him as God will for sure be the nail on the head.

After that, they will stop at nothing to destroy him. Jesus, of course, knows this, but he chooses to push ahead and do so.

[5 : 40] The next three days of that week sees a multitude of final choices. Final visit to the temple and a very well thought through and spiritually laid choice as to his parting message.

Final teachings, final parables, final stories, each one specifically chosen as a lasting message. And then Thursday, festival of Passover.

And Jesus is on a last minute alert to drive home his message. Skillfully choosing to use the festival as a fantastic platform to talk to thousands.

Teaching his most important lessons, the sheep and the goats, the talents and such things. And as Jesus works through his choices, there in the background, let's not forget, Judas has made a choice of his own.

For right in the middle of that same city, Judas is conspiring. Conspiring with the enemy. To trap, arrest and catch Jesus.

[6 : 58] Jesus, of course, is all too aware. But Jesus chooses to stay put. Because months before, he told the disciples, When they come to get me, I'm going with them.

I'm staying put. I'm sure it was a long day. And at day's end, just as many others do, Jesus and his twelve set off to enjoy a good meal and a refreshing drink for the final time.

And Jesus, the host, as always, doesn't disappoint. In fact, in spite of the knowledge of what lies ahead, arrest, prison, court, crucifixion, Jesus chooses to give the greatest meal of all.

They pray, they worship, there's foot washing, the teaching is second to none, all about love. I mean, like to us, something seems to be wrong in the reading.

Because of all the nights, we should expect Jesus to be calling an emergency meeting, to be making an escape committee. This would be it. No one would blame Jesus if he made a plan to escape here.

[8 : 16] He's just hours from the cross. But even so, in these final hours before the cross, Jesus has made the one and only choice he needs to make.

He has made the one and only choice he wants to make. He has chosen to remain put with his twelve friends. He has chosen to simply love them. So no escape plan, no emergency meeting, the choice is simple.

With his final hours alive, he just wants to spend time with friends, showing them his love. And so as Midnight approaches, Jesus now has to get quicker with his choices.

The enemy is moving fast, and so must Jesus. So Jesus now chooses to rise up and journey to Gethsemane. Even as I read that, I hear myself saying, well, stop, Jesus.

That's where Judas has taken them. But of course, Jesus knows that as well, doesn't he? And so on they go to Gethsemane. The choice has been made.

[9 : 31] They rise up and go out together. I am out in the twelve. We're starting to latch on. Something is different about tonight.

Jesus himself is pondering with very, very, very deep thoughts as they finally approach Gethsemane's gate. And somewhere else, don't forget that group of ruthless men is preparing to lead themselves to that very same gate.

The final battle has begun, if you like. And as they all finally enter the garden, Jesus can see what the disciples cannot see. Jesus sees a battlefield between good and evil.

Jesus sees Satan up to his evil usual ways. Jesus sees God's holy heart reaching back out against Satan. Jesus sees light and dark clash.

And Jesus knows before it's all over, he will be taken captive. He knows his disciples will abandon him. Soldiers will beat him.

[10 : 36] But he doesn't accuse. He doesn't lecture. He doesn't even run away, as we've said. He just chooses to enter the garden scene, kneel, and pray.

And he now chooses to have his final prayer time. And this is no ordinary prayer time. This one sees Jesus, still a young man, in the grove, on the ground, in a sweat-soaked garment, kneeling, imploring, hair plastered to his forehead, blood draining from his pores.

He feels the heaviness of the whole world crushing him. And so he agonizes. He deeply agonizes. The disciples are in the background, sleeping. And that only adds to the troubles.

Please, he asks, stay awake and pray with me for your own good and mine. The Lord of the universe chooses to include his disciples in the depths of his vulnerability.

No secrets here. No shame here. No embarrassment. No heart in the fact of where he is. Full honesty. Friends, I'm feeling desperate.

[11 : 51] Help me. And so he prays. And take note of the prayer. He prays for the disciples.

He prays for unity. He prays for God's presence. And he prays for you and me. He chose to pray for us. For all of us today in 2025 who are believing in him, that we will be protected, blessed, and live in unity.

We need to note this on our hearts and minds. That as Jesus entered these final agonizing hours, that as he entered that garden, you were on his mind.

All of us. He had chosen to think about us and pray for us. As Jesus looked up to heaven, he saw you in his vision.

As Jesus dreamed about going back home to be with God again, he dreamed of you being there with him. As he looked up in excitement about being back with his father God, he saw you in the family circle too.

[13 : 04] And so he chose to make his final prayer about you and me. He chose to make his final pain for you and me. He chose to make his final passion for us.

And so his soul is flooded with love and excitement. But the sorrow is attacking right back. He tells his disciples, his soul is overwhelmed.

And yes, the human side of him may ask, is there another way? But Jesus, the God, the Savior is going nowhere. He can't.

Because right in the middle of this dark, hellish ordeal, he sees you and me. He sees us in an unjust world. He sees us betrayed by those we love.

He sees us sick, depressed, tempted, oppressed, tired, fed up. He sees us growing weak and dying. And of course, he chose his choice.

[14 : 07] He chose not to leave us in that state alone. He wanted us to know he has been there. He has done it before us and for us.

He wanted the entire future of humanity to be okay. To have an escape route, a way out, a way home, a way to heaven. And the thought of us and that alone is enough to keep Jesus focused.

And so, with that on his mind, with you and I, he rises to his feet. The anguish is gone. The angels are holding him now. Prayers answered, hearts blessed, blessed, blessed, fists clenched, Holy Spirit filled, as he now chooses to go right up to the face of his attackers and meets his betrayers head on.

And this is where the real battle was won, by the way. The cross was always going to happen. The grave would always be emptied, but it was here after torment and temptation from Satan that Jesus victoriously chose to go through with the whole thing.

And the one crowning attribute that's seen Jesus win. the one crowning attribute that's seen Jesus win in the garden was very simply his choice.

[15 : 37] And here was his choice that he, Jesus himself, would rather go to hell for you than go back home to heaven without you.

Jesus would rather endure the hellish ordeal of all that was ahead for you. rather than go back up to heaven without giving you an opportunity to come as well.

What a choice it was. And so he does it. He walks right into their hands and as he says in our reading from today, they took him away and they made him suffer and they killed him.

Jesus having lived through the horrificness of this world and having seen first hand what death does to the human had left him broken.

Absolutely broken. And so he refused to go back home to heaven without doing something about it first. That's why.

[16 : 47] That's why months before the cross happened, Jesus declares here in our reading at this stage of the biography, they're coming to get me, you know, and I'm going with them.

When they come, prepare yourselves because I've chosen Peter, John, James, to go with them for you. having spent time face to face with humanity, Jesus' heart bursted with love for humanity and he made sure he provided a path of forgiveness and redemption so that we could go and be with him in heaven beyond this life.

And I suppose that brings us nicely to that last part of the reading because Jesus having proclaimed his choice that he had chosen to go and suffer and die for us now turns the table and says, so what about you?

As in me and you here today? He says, what's your choice? He says, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. The use of the pronoun whoever expresses people need to choose.

So the emphasis is on the whoever. Whoever wants to be, whoever chooses to be my disciple is called to live a very, very different life.

[18 : 12] So Westerhills Baptist Church, from knowing Jesus' story, we know the meaning behind his word picture here, carry the cross. And so truth is, Jesus presents here a clear and challenging description of the Christian life.

being his disciple means putting aside selfish desires and instead making a daily recommitment to him every day.

It's very, very, very simple, but it's very, very, very challenging. And don't forget, for the original twelve, this meant literally dying.

and for many believers today it still means that. And whether or not we will literally die for our faith, it still means that we have to die inwardly and instead live for his purposes.

Consider it this way, little challenge. Do you think of your relationship with God primarily in terms of what's in it for you?

[19 : 26] Consumers Christianity, Wayne the ministry call it. You believe you are tithing, paying God, attending services, doing prayers to therefore receive back from him.

Or do you think of your relationship in terms of I was lost, I was destroyed, I was heading to hell. Then Jesus came. Then Jesus made a choice to save me, to give me life, to give me heaven.

And so now all I want to do is worship him, tell others about him, help the poor, serve his kingdom, carry my own cross like he did so that I can be like him. Where are you?

We're probably all doing a bit of both. But let's be focused on making a steadfast choice to be his disciples and carry our crosses daily.

And yeah, verse 24, 25, whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their very self?

[20 : 34] If this present life is most important to us, we will do everything to protect it. We will not want to endanger our safety, our health, our comfort, and we will die in that position and in the end lose everything.

Nothing will come with us, no possessions, no health, no friendships, no romances, no pictures, no memories, nothing will come with you.

Life over hell, everything lost, gone, done. By contrast, if following Jesus is most important to you, we may find ourselves unsafe, unhealthy, uncomfortable, dangerous places, dangerous situations.

We may even risk death. But we will not fear any of these scenarios because we know that Jesus will raise us up to eternal life and so on the opposite, we enter heaven and Jesus awards us for our efforts and we can gain and have eternal life.

Heaven, Jesus, we're alive, soul saved. Nothing material can make up for the loss of eternal life. If we choose to be his disciples, we must use our lives to build his kingdom and not our earthly desires.

[22 : 07] One, this little passage, Jesus proclaims he's made a choice to suffer, die and rise and he's going to do it. He's clear about that from early on in his ministry.

Two, if you are claiming to be his follower, he then says to you, if you want to be a real disciple, you need to carry your cross, give up your desires, build the kingdom, help the poor, be there for the struggling, preach the word.

Three, if you haven't decided to trust Jesus just yet, then remember, Jesus loves you so much that he would rather have went through that hellish ordeal of a crucifixion than have went back home to heaven without giving you a chance to come with him.

That's how much he loves you and that's exactly what he did for you. Let me pray and then the guys will lead us in one final song. Lord Jesus, it is with great thanks that we thank you for your choice.

Your choice was made that you would embrace and go through what was planned by the religious leaders and you stay put.

[23 : 29] Personally, Jesus, thank you. As a fellowship together, thank you, Lord. As Christians all over the world, thank you. Eternity itself is not enough time to say thank you for what you've done, but it's all we've got, so we'll use it to say thank you, thank you, and thank you.

Hallelujah. Amen. Amen. May you go forth from here knowing the vast and mighty love of Jesus.

A love wrapped up in those famous words for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever makes the choice to believe will not perish but be saved.

And may you go forth a strong disciple choosing to fulfill Jesus' command to love each other as he loved the twelve. May you choose to carry your cross. And so to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forever.

Amen.