

WELCOME 19th July 2020 – 7 Pentecost '20 A

Psalm 19:7-11 & Luke 10:38-42

Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in this brief time on-line. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

We're continuing to adapt our worship in this season...Again today there are Group Study/Discussion resources available on our website & I hope you've got those handy. Our on-line service is going to be more compact so you have time to go through that material & the Growing Praise with those you've gathered in your homes. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into this city to declare what God has done for you. **As we move into this week...**

35,000 – that's a big number – 35,000

The number of new coronavirus cases in Victoria this week? No

The number of businesses closed in NSW the last 4 months? No

The number of people allowed to go to NRL matches this past weekend? No

It's the number of choices/decisions scientists say the average adult makes in a day: 35,000

From unconscious/forgettably mundane – what to eat for breakfast, wear to work in the garden, word choices

To the infinitely more complex & life-altering – when to merge into a busy roundabout, treatment/care options as age illness or infirmity advance, vocation, spouse, parenting, home-buying...

Some choices we immediately regret. Others we treasure forever.

But every choice from the mundane to the life-altering shapes us & forms us either leading to peace & contentment or second guessing & regret/shame. Who or what are you listening to in the choices you make? Who are you aiming to please when you choose? How does that affect your life, your relationships, your fulfillment & your future?

FAITH FORMED LISTENING...attending to Jesus...reading his Word...choosing to honour him by being still in his presence is to immerse ourselves in our relationship with Jesus in such a way that it starts to control the shape of our lives & not our lives controlling our relationship with Jesus... **FAITH FORMED LISTENING** is to find peace in each moment of every day because the presence power provision & protection of God embraces us with life in its fullest & joy that never ends.

We'll explore and experience that together today...especially when we turn worship over to you in your homes with those other disciples around you... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Heavenly Father, we are not people of fear: we are people of courage who call out Abba Father & know you hear & answer.

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who, as your Son cared for us even unto death, care for our neighbour & reach out to those in need in the face of risk.

We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity because you are abundantly generous to us.

We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs for as long as it takes wherever you call us.

In the Name of Jesus Christ...Amen

FAITH CHAT:

1. How often do you read larger portions of the Bible...more than a verse or two at a time?
2. Do you ever get the sense God says something directly to you when you read the Bible? What?
3. What do you think God wants you to hear in this season of your life? Why?

BIBLES

7 Pentecost '20 A - FAITH FORMED LISTENING

I was mildly triggered this week...I had a flashback to some difficult family moments. My daughter & I were watching a movie & the opening scene took place in a BlockBuster Video store. Now I know video stores are gone like dinosaurs, but they were a nightmare for our family...trying to get children & adults to agree on suitable movies from such a vast array of options...there were just too many choices & often our kids were overwhelmed & it ended in tears. I said I was *mildly* triggered...I didn't burst into sobs/weeping. I got over it & then laughed @ myself.

But part of that remembering of the family struggle of too many choices was the reminder that I make some choices & think "John you got that one exactly right" (Leonie & I 31st anniv...I got that one spot on) & there are others when I decide on "this" & it isn't long before I'm thinking, "John...what were you thinking?" (I could show you pictures of me with a mullet)

Here's the thing...When I think about a choice that I hit for 6...it becomes a moment of pride. I applaud my wisdom. I celebrate my insight & discernment. My sense of self-worth & value skyrockets. When I get it wrong...decide/choose & it goes pear-shaped...my sense of worthiness lovableness acceptableness...ends up somewhere around a snake's belly.

My sense is that's what we often do with the account of this meal in Mary & Martha's house...The narrative is familiar. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem & in a village along the way he is invited to Mary/Martha's place for dinner. It's a big deal & Martha's got her game face on. The kitchen is hopping. A no holds barred full on feast is about to roll out for Jesus & his friends...who knows how many are there? Mary, however, is so blown away that Jesus is in the house that she squeezes herself right amongst the other disciples & is hanging on Jesus' every word. She is literally sitting right at his feet...no social distancing for her...Martha emerges from the kitchen in a pretty flustered state "*Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come & help me.*" And if you just look at the surface, it looks like Jesus picked sides & chose Mary: "*My dear Martha, you are worried & upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, & it will not be taken away from her.*"

Some translations say something like, "*Mary has made the better choice/good choice/right choice,*" & the pastors like me from that point forward have said things like...Go be like Mary. We've exalted the prayerful quiet contemplative attentive Mary over the active busy go-get-'em Martha. It looks like Jesus said, "Mary got this one right & Martha you missed the boat, better luck next time." But...is Mary "better," more holy, more loved, more acceptable to Jesus because she got this one right? We all know the answer to that is No...but what's really going on here? **BIBLES LK 10**

Let's step back & have a look at the bigger picture...As Luke recounts his biography of Jesus, Chap 10 starts with Jesus commissioning 72 of his followers to enter the ministry of His Kingdom. He literally sends them out to do the very things he has done: heal the sick, announce the arrival of God's kingdom, & evidently cast out demons because when they come back they're ecstatic: *When the 72 disciples returned, they joyfully reported, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!"* So...Jesus certainly isn't against an active faith lifestyle...he commissioned it. Then Jesus tells one of his most well-known parables: The Good Samaritan where the hero of the story is the guy who picks up the battered unconscious mugging victim off the side of the road, takes him to an Inn, dresses his wound & leaves \$\$\$ & instructions for further care & the story finishes with "*Go & do likewise.*" Find a need to meet it; find a hurt to heal it. Jesus isn't against an active faith lifestyle...he said imitate it. So... what's really going on in this instance?

I don't believe this event is a contest ^{b/t} Mary & Martha or really about which style of faithfulness is preferred or better. In fact, I don't believe this recounting is really about the 2 sisters at all, but about you/me & the choices we make. If it was just about Mary's choice over against Martha's...about that "one thing" Mary somehow figured out, why didn't Jesus tell us what that "one thing" is? What I am convinced Jesus is saying is that our choices matter.

We are always making choices. Some 35K times/day unconsciously or consciously, easily or ^{w/} enormous deliberation, decisions/choices that are made & forgotten or that have lasting impact...but each one matters. Every choice from the mundane to the life-altering shapes us & forms us. They establish patterns & habits of how we see the world & act in it. We choose the words we speak & the ways we relate to each other & those choices set a trajectory a path & a pattern for our lives. Our choices make a difference because every one leads us to peace/contentment or 2nd-guessing regret or shame ... Our choices make a difference to us/those around us.

Look at the sisters. Which one is content in her choice? Which one enjoys a measure of satisfaction or peace? Which one has found her heart's desire in her choice? Which one is absolutely lost in the moment & can't imagine being anywhere better? Which sister wouldn't trade her choice for anything or anyone else? It's obvious...Mary. But why?

Jesus tells us every choice/decision is an opportunity to find some form of fulfilment/contentment/joy but **NO** choice fully achieves that purpose if it is made apart from honouring him...if it is made from the perspective of "me" alone...

Notice how Martha evaluates Mary's choice? What's Martha's contentment? satisfaction? peace? joy? goal?

Jesus tells us every choice/decision is an opportunity to find some form of fulfilment/contentment/joy but **NO** choice fully achieves that purpose if it is made apart from honouring him...if it is made from the perspective of "me" alone...3X in the NT Paul writes to followers of Jesus saying, "*whatever you do*" do it from the standpoint of how that decision honours Christ, glorifies God, is aimed at pleasing Christ not anyone else. 1 Cor 10:31 – debate about eating food that has been used in pagan worship... So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Col 3 he writes to build & strengthen the Xn community as folks who are chosen by the Father to be the living image of Jesus to their not-yet-Xn neighbours ...whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. – Col 3:17 – From there he shifts into those relationship closest to us...family & work under-pinning all of that...*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.* – Col 3:22 --- ATAR not as a leverage for your success but as an opportunity to glorify God in your studies

47X the NT uses the words "one another" to describe how followers of Christ are to live in relationship w/ each other as part of the family of faith. Every one of those is an encouragement to live lifting up building up protecting serving someone else often at your own expense because that's what Jesus did in dying/rising for you...in forgiving you in loving you in adopting you into the Father's eternal love mercy & grace. The "one anothers" guide our choosing deciding & living in imitation of Christ who offered himself in love...*and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us.* Rev 1:5

I was listening to a conversation among some young people the other day about choosing a spouse/getting married. What do you look for in a spouse/Why do you get married? Is I think how the conversation began...These fairly astute young people made a good biblical case for marriage. Marriage as H/W better reflects the image of God in which we are created, a good marriage H/W shows the world how Jesus loves his church...selflessly & sacrificially....H/W serving & supporting each other helps H/W carry out their vocations & their different ministries...and on the conversation went. Like I said a great biblical reflection on marriage & how to choose a H/W. It was clear these young folks were addressing not something they read in a magazine somewhere or the latest Social Media Influencer's opinion...but God's Word...the Bible.

Who/what are you listening to in the choices you make? Who/What shapes your attitudes, opinions, values, behaviour? Ps 19 - *The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.* Perfection here means wholeness completeness fullness. Within God's Word we find everything we need to know about who God is & who we are. It tells us about the devastating effects of our sin & the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 3:16-17 -*All Scripture is inspired by God & is useful to teach us what is true & to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong & teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare & equip his people to do every good work.* God's word guides us in our relationship w/ Him. When we wander away or deliberately run off...it draws us back to Him When we are confused or unsure of a decision or path it points us to His way ahead. In every circumstance...God's Word breathes life into us every time we read it...revives renews revitalizes refreshes restores us to Him & restores in us His image...by drawing us back into the heart of the Father Himself...deep into his love for us. God's Word is trustworthy reliable never misleads or points to a dead end or a dodgy outcome. It is impossible to grow increasingly conformed to the image of Christ w/o His direction w/o His hand shaping & guiding our growing. God's Word is given to bless us not burden us.

But the part of those promises that really grabs me is verse 11 - *They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.* Now our inclination is to read that like this: "If I do what God's word says then I'll get a great reward." Quid pro quo. I scratch God's back he scratches mine. Not what it says. Better translation is sorta like this: *Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.* Which is really more like..."As I learn to live in line with what God says, I'll gradually discover that here & now that is the most rewarding way of life" The life that God reveals to us is its own reward. We live in accord with God's way/plans/purposes not to get a reward, but because His way is a perpetual way of blessing & good.

I think that's the "better part" Jesus is talking about. He's not favoring Mary over Martha, & he's not lifting up one way of living the Christian life over another. Rather, he's inviting us to get caught up in the joy of being in his presence immersed in His Word hearing his voice such that we forget, if only for a little while, all the usual things that hold us back, all the usual worries & headaches & concerns, & simply be, w/ Christ, "in Christ."

FAITH FORMED LISTENING...attending to Jesus...reading his Word...choosing to honour him by being still in his presence is to immerse ourselves in our relationship with Jesus in such a way that it starts to control the shape of our lives & not our lives controlling our relationship with Jesus... **FAITH FORMED LISTENING** is to find peace in each moment of every day because the presence power provision & protection of God embraces us with life in its fullest & joy that never ends.

Here's where today's opportunity gets exciting...I'll stop here & we'll sing one last song. I'll leave you to pray together explore the Scriptures & Discussion material together & commune together...maybe share lunch or find some way to extend worship into the rest of your day

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father prepare me for whatever you require today and lead me in faith wherever you call me to go. In Jesus' Name...Amen**

...Let's sing...Living Hope