

SERMON: “CHOICES: Serve.”

Rev. Geoff Ross: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton, Sun., Oct., 8, 2017

Over the course of this series on CHOICES we've talked about how our choices can either make or break our lives: how they will determine our eternity. For the first three weeks the 'choices' were largely internal – they required a personal decision to 'start,' 'stop,' and to 'stay' the course of God's path/plan for us: last week we shifted to a more external 'choice' – the choice to 'go', of trusting in God's plan, even if it means leaving everything behind. Like last week's choice, the choice to “serve” also requires us to act obediently/faithfully – sacrificially – to God's will/plan for us.

Now, to be honest, this series is pretty straightforward: but have you ever noticed that 'right/good' choices are easy to make but are usually the most difficult to do. [Good Intentions] This isn't because the choices aren't clear – it's because following through on our choices (the 'right/good' ones that God is calling us to make), at some point, will require us to give something up/put skin in the game/take the hit/sacrifice ourselves; not for our own gain, but for someone/something other than us. And this is the problem: when the choice/path/plan ahead seems 'risky' or 'uncertain' we balk/hesitate/shy away from doing what we know is the 'right thing,' choosing – if we're honest – to be selfish instead of selfless. I get it; we all want to be 'safe' and 'comfortable': but at what cost?

[25/'round world trip/solo/yolo]

If there's one thing that Jesus made clear, it's that this life is not all about us: we are not here for ourselves; we're here because of God's grace – and because of what Jesus did by coming to be with us to die for us. Made in His image, God wants us to create rather than consume: God didn't create us to be takers, we were created to be givers; like Jesus we were not created to be served, we were created to serve – God, by serving others. Because of this Jesus calls us live as He lived, to die to/deny ourselves. We hear this in Jesus' teaching to his status-hungry disciples: *“whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* (Matt 20:26-28) Friends, if He followed God's will/not His own to do what He did for us, shouldn't our lives belong to Him/be more about God – and others – and less about us? Seen this way, serving – being a servant – is who we are created/saved to 'be.'

“My food,” says Jesus in our reading, *“is to do what God wants! He is the one who sent me, and I must finish the work that he gave me to do.”* At first the disciples were confused – wondering what Jesus was talking about? Some context: Jesus had just finished talking to a thirsty woman to whom He offered the “living water” that only God can provide, satisfying her thirst forever – and His disciples were worried that Jesus hadn't eaten. But Jesus responds; *“I have food that you don't know anything about:”* telling them that His needs are secondary to God's: He's here to serve God's will and to finish His work. What Jesus is saying is that serving God's will feeds the soul – giving

us a spiritual nourishment that will feed us like nothing else can. If we are followers of Jesus then our food – our joy, purpose for being – is to serve God. It's not what we do; called/commissioned, it's who we are.

[India/Bhils – Grateful/humbled – changed: not about me/what we do/who we're called to be. FB:TxYou/serve/be-X]

This is important for us to hear. “*Serving*” is what we were made for, and it is how we can show our love for God. Serving God, as Paul says (Romans, Chapter 12), is meant to be our response for our salvation through God's grace – we are “*to offer [our] bodies to [God] as a living sacrifice.... [as]the most sensible way to serve God,*” – it is also why we were given spiritual [serving] gifts; so we can use give ourselves to God/others. It is why Jesus – in the reading – talks about the ‘harvest’ to come – and the ‘harvest workers’; comparing Himself – and His followers – to laborers who work, not for themselves, but for the sake of doing God's will for them and others.

[Email: VH – “Thankful.]

To be clear, while we are not saved *by* ‘serving’ we are saved *for* ‘serving;’ because faith without service is dead: without is we are dead – and so will the people we were meant to serve. The choice to “serve” is the truest test of faith/obedience and worship: no matter how old/who you are, we were made/are called/commissioned to serve – to make the faith forward action of feeding your neighbours with the same spiritual food that saved/sustains you. Make the right choice: live out God's will for you, be Christ to others; “serve.” Amen.