

"You Choose!"

April 4, 2004

Luke 19:28-40; 22:19-28 & 23:8-11

The alarm clock rings and you are startled into a half awake state and you have choices to make slap the snooze button or not ;;;; roll over and go back to sleep or not be grumpy or glad

Will it be a shower or bath this morning or not

Coffee or juice or both

Cereal and toast or bacon and eggs ...

And then the big one from inside the jam packed closet you moan, "there is nothing to wear" but you must choose.

Throughout the day, every day, every week, all year long you must choose

Jesus lifts Himself up unto the cloths that have been thrown over the back of the donkey that His disciples have brought to Him and begins a slow ride down the hill called the Mount of Olives. He will soon cross the Kidron Valley and come to the outer wall of the city of Jerusalem. At first it was close followers cheering Him on but as He comes closer to the city more and more people join in the children are so excited and so are the disciples. You look at the scene in amazement knowing that something very important is happening. You know that an announcement is being made that says that this person Jesus is being acclaimed as King and Savior. But you have to choose! Is He? Or is it just another bunch of those religious fanatics? You choose!

I know that you have heard it all before. It is one of those good church platitudes to say that you have to choose whether you will believe that Jesus is King & Savior or not. And we believe that we have done so. That is why we are sitting in church this morning or why we are listening on the radio or tv. For that matter, most Americans believe that they have made the choice. On a 'polling' web site I found that recent polls taken reveal that

	% Believe	% Don't Believe	% Not Sure .
God	92	5	3
Heaven	85	10	5
Miracles	82	14	4
Angels	78	15	7
Hell	74	20	6
The Devil	71	24	5
UFOs	34	55	11

Ghosts	34	60	6
Astrology	29	64	7
Reincarnation	25	62	13
Witches	24	69	7

Imagine - 92 % of those responding to the poll say that they have chosen to believe in God. Of course, a certain percentage of them also believes in witches, astrology and Ghosts as well. [I'm not sure what that means - I personally do not believe that you can believe in both] ----- We have chosen. We chose to believe in God and specifically in Jesus the Christ.

But then, so did the disciples as they threw their cloaks on the donkey and palm branches on the dusty road. But then the soldiers came to find Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane And there they had to choose again. Later, as they reclined for supper with Jesus in the 'upper room' they again had to choose. They talked about who it was that could possibly make the choice to betray Jesus - most saying that it would never be them but then they turned the discussion and they talked about which of them was the greatest. Both Herod and Pilate had made choices regarding Jesus. You might well sense the excitement that each of these leaders had for meeting Jesus - they both decided in His favor but then they gave in to the pressure that was being exerted against them and Jesus was passed back and forth until they washed their hands of Him and turned to ridicule and rejection.

I sat in my office this past week wishing that I did not have to choose whether to preach on the triumph of Palm Sunday or the sorrow of the suffering which Christ endured in the last week before the Sunday we celebrate as Easter. I wish that I did not have to choose - but we always must choose and we must choose again.

I read about a woman who said she would not become a Christian because there were too many obstacles in the path of belief. "I'm not an atheist, but I'm just not convinced that God exists, or that Christianity is the right religion. I'm going to withhold judgment, and consider the matter impartially." That's fine, except that I hope this woman decides pretty soon. She is 87 years old, and her so-called "neutrality" is fast becoming academic!

It makes me think of a radio announcement that said that next week was National Procrastinators' Week. "Actually," said the announcer, "they were going to hold the celebration this week, but the organizers decided to put it off until next week!"

Does Jesus come as King and Savior in your life - or not? Will Jesus rule as king in your life today - or not? When you run into the pressures of the world and the demands of those around you this week and the next will you choose Christ as your ruler - or not? When in the days ahead you are called to act as a servant to your brothers and sisters - will you follow the called to walk behind Jesus - or not? ----- We all know how easy it is to say that we have chosen to believe in Jesus and then to find ourselves walking in the footsteps of the disciples who run under pressure - or even to stand with Pilate or Herod to simply say that what we believe about Jesus is not important enough to fight for what we believe. We choose - over and over again. Is He going to be your king in today's actions or not? Will we run to Him with Palm branches on Sunday morning and away from Him in fear on Friday night?

Perhaps it is precisely for this reason that the suffering of Christ is so remarkable. Jesus choose that pathway of God against all odds. Jesus choose your life and mine over His own. When disciples told Him that it was dangerous to go to Jerusalem He would not listen. When He faced the opposition of the religious leaders, He would not flinch. When He prayed in the Garden He would not run. When He was

nailed to a cross and lifted up He would not call upon the legions of angles at His command. He would not because He choose us.

AMEN