

The Right Decision. (Joh 6:41-51)

* We begin *In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Dear Heavenly Father, I ask you strengthen your flock by the power of the eternal bread when we hear your Word and come to the Lord's Table so that we can see all goodness you give us in Your Son and be able to make a right choice, for to You alone belongs the Kingdom, and the power and the gloria forever and ever. Amen*

* Friends, doesn't traveling demand bodily support? Certainly, it does. A majority of us have experienced the fact that hiking or riding all day demands a lot of energy. Even a physically strong person cannot cover a three day walking distance without food. The food makes a difference in energy level producing a movement ahead. It is clear as crystal, a person needs food when he is on a journey of a thousand miles. But because not all food benefits us in the same manner the travelers need to make a choice in taking dry snacks, canned goods, bread, sandwiches, fruits, raw veggies and so forth. For instance, the travelers should know that the eating of Iron rich foods like raisins and beans helps against bleeding if a person accidentally gets cut in the field. On the other hand, too much iron in the blood is harmful and can be lethal. The right choice is always right if the travelers will choose food based on the high in protein and carbohydrate content. Therefore the entire success of the journey relies upon the choice between two kinds of food, healthy-rich or spicy-crunchy-sweet; or in short, between true or deceitful food.

* Now considering carefully the Gospel reading from John 6, we've received a sense that the following discourse between Jews and Jesus signifies the idea of *making a choice*. Here we see Jesus confronting truth with an illusion of his identity. He says, *I am not from this world*, (Joh 8:23), *I am one who gives life to the world*, (v.33), and *no one can come to me unless the Father draws him*. Saying this, Jesus warns his attendants and generations after them against preoccupations with wrong ideas. Even though, the physical world may look charming and awesome, it still remains the temporal, (v.49). Even though, it seems that Jesus is completely human, but in fact, he is also the Son of the Almighty Father, (v.40). Even though it seems that believing in Jesus is an act of a free human will, it is still a miracle, (v.44a). Therefore three illusions come into our view: one is about the physical world; the second is about Jesus' identity; and the third is about the nature of faith.

* Friends, many of us are not freshmen in Christendom; even some of u are veterans. My point is that we made the choice to be disciples of Jesus Christ many years ago; and since some of us are veterans there is no such a problem to accept Jesus, but I tell you, there is still a possible problem to reject Jesus, (Eph 4:30; Heb 6:4-6; 1Ti 6:10). Friends, the significant moment of becoming Christians had a tremendous impact on our life but it is not comparable with how we live the rest of our lives where each day challenges us to make a choice. No doubt, we are choice makers but not all of us are successful makers! As Christians we are given the privilege to make free and right choices on spiritual matters; praise the Lord! But the three illusions, about World, Jesus' Identity, and the Nature of Faith still play Jack with our free choices to make the right choice.

* It has occurred to me that the three temptations on Jesus' account can be used as the evidence showing that a nature of satanic temptations is originated from the mentioned illusions. In addition to this smart remark, let's say that the devil tempts on purpose; he wants us to make a wrong decision. A distinct difference here is that our right decision is the secret of your success and it is the key of satan's failure. Now, to prove the point we will review the satanic temptations against Jesus that are also may be ours.

* The first one. *And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* Notice Jesus didn't respond according to his kingship because it would be contrary to the economy of salvation through the King's humiliation. The Son of God came to us as a servant and left the image of a servant to his followers (Isa 42:1; Joh 13:14-17). On the other hand, Jesus is also the King, we are not. The time of our kingship with Christ is still ahead, (Rev 20:4). Yes, we are given to rule with Christ, but in the first place, to rule above our own sinful nature. On people's demand for the excessive gifts, such as healing, exorcism, prophesy and some other things, Jesus demands their patience and contentment. But if there is no understanding, patience and contentment, there is also no right decision.

* The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their grandeur. And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you throw yourself to the ground and worship me." (Mat 4:8,9). Friends, even it is so obvious and clear that we live in an unstable and perishable world, some Christians show attitudes as if they are going to live in this world forever. Their hearts are in the house of

mirth and sensual joy, (Ecc 7:4). Because of the illusion regarding this world, the wrong decisions are taken and foolish hearts are filled with worldly joy.

* And the devil said to him, *If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you' and 'with their hands they will lift you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'* (Mat 4:6). The misconception regarding a nature of faith brought a lot of tragedies upon individuals. When Jesus said that all things are possible for one who believes, (Mar 9:23) he didn't mean that all things are possible for a man. Jesus meant that all things are possible for God who gives faith, (Mar 10:27; Eph 2:8-9). It is far from the truth thinking that faith is a product of human will upon the hearing of the gospel. It is as if a man decided to jump from 110 stories of the SEARS TOWER because he believed that angels would lift him up so that he was not strike his foot against a concrete floor. Well, then a man needs to ask the Lord for a sign first, (Jdg 6:17). Could you imagine the cost of a wrong decision on a matter of faith?

* Friends, beyond question each day we make choices to do something. Here I mean not our decision to drink a cup of coffee or tea but decisions we make on a matter of Christian ethics, beliefs and of vital importance. Sometimes we are confused by different opinions, preoccupations and beliefs to make the right choice. What to do? Please notice, each incident is specific and it needs to be treated accordingly. Nevertheless a common advice can be given. It comes from a real story I heard from my sister in Christ, Stacey Basil.

* At the time, Stacey was a teacher of physical education in elementary school. During the winter season she had a group of students who liked ski touring. They usually met on Saturdays. One Saturday Stacey decided not to go because of cold weather; it was below 10 F. But her students were so opinionated and excited that finally she said 'uncle.' After sliding about two miles through a forest, one student exclaimed, "Teacher my feet are freezing! For Stacey it sounded like thunder in a blue-sky. What to do? The first thought she came up with urged her to give emergency treatment while another thought said to go back. In seconds the next student cried in response to the first, 'you are a spoiled child, my thumbs have felt nothing, but I didn't complain about that! Friends, just a rhetorical question, What would be your decision, to go home, to give a hand, or to do something else? Stacey said that she didn't know what to do. And it was a good time to ask for help. That moment she lifted her right hand and silently prayed, Our Father Who art in Heaven After Amen, she said her mind went

blank. Then one thought filled her mind immensely, “Now they will get warm.” She believed and said to the students, ‘Now you will get warm.’ On her third sliding step the first student cried, ‘O teacher! Are you a wizard? My thumbs became warm! And the second student conformed, ‘Right! I feel mine feet as they were set in fire.’ Some girls even started to unbutton their coats. In short, the group had a fun that day and Stacey was rewarded with faith to faith. This story was not accomplished unless and until the five years had gone after that memorial day and Stacey told her former students the secret of their warming. In response all class asked her to teach them to pray, the Lord’s Prayer. The teens were taught and received gifts, the New Testaments. Isn’t it the great outcome of the right decision?

* Friends, before you make your decision, pray to the Lord. I heard a wise slogan on this context. *Seek God, your Lord from all your mind, from all your heart and you will see Him, hear Him, understand, get sense Him,, and experience Him.* Today we gathered to the church to be fed with truth and to be helped to make the right choice. The Lord has responded. From him we received a warning to keep ourselves far away from illusions on the matter of death and life. Jesus says, I am the bread of life, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Remember, the secret of success is the right decision. How do we make the right decision? Pray, receive, believe and act.

Beloved, grace and peace upon you in your right decision.

Amen