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Already this morning I've made numerous choices. I had to choose what to eat for breakfast. As I stood in front of my closet, I had to decide what tie to wear, knowing it should match the choice I made in other clothing. I didn't have to think much about my choice to attend Central Christian for worship this morning, but some of you may have faced that choice today or at another point in your life. Think about all the numerous choices you face each day. What are some of those choices you have faced recently? ...

A couple was facing the challenge of balancing their income over expenses. They categorized all their expenses, trying to decide what they could afford and what to give up. Finally, one of them suggested, "Let's start with the basic necessities—food, clothing, and shelter. We have a choice of any two."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes our choices may lead to unexpected consequences, as was the case with

Jack (Guelker) had purchased archery equipment and could hardly wait to try it out. Knowing that bales of hay would provide an

excellent backdrop for a target, but having none readily available, he chose to use more obtainable facilities. Several sheets of insulation board leaning against an old out-building seemed to provide the perfect substitute.

After centering the target over the boards, he stepped off the required distance to practice shooting. He strung the bow, carefully fitted an arrow onto the bowstring, drew the arrow and fired. Although the arrow struck the target, the instantaneous sound of breaking glass was the first indication that the target area might not have been a good choice.

In the springtime, however, it had seemed the best place to stack all twenty of the storm windows from the house. The arrow had passed through the target, the insulation boards, and the entire stack of glass windows, breaking every one.<sup>2</sup>

You might say he made a pane-ful choice for those window panes.

In the Bible, we encounter many who had to choose as well, who made a choice in how to live their lives. After Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery and helped them gain their freedom from the Pharaoh, he led them to a land of hope and freedom. Although he died before entering the land,

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his successor Joshua continued the journey, who faced many choices along the way. They struggled to gain a place to live, facing the opposition of those who didn't want them settling in their land. They encountered inhabitants who would rather fight than share their land, a common struggle we still have today as nations fight over resources and land.

After many years of turmoil, as Joshua aged and neared the end of his life, he reminded the people of the many ways God had protected them through their countless struggles and gave them a choice. As Joshua recounted their story, he emphasized that it was not by sword or bow, not by might and strength, that they settled in the new lands, but by God handing it over to them. God said, "I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and towns that you had not built, and you live in them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards that you did not plant."

On the one hand this is a celebration story, but I also realize there must be another side of the story we don't get to hear, for it's said that the victorious

are the ones who get to write history. What about the people who were originally living in those lands? What about those who had planted the vineyards and oliveyards? What happened to them? I imagine they would tell a much different story.

It's a bit like how we tell American history: we sometimes proclaim we discovered a new land and settled peacefully, eating Thanksgiving meals served with our newfound friends who lived here. But actually, we invaded a land already settled by Native Americans and drove them to reservations. We forced a deeply spiritual people who worshiped God's wondrous creation to adopt religious practices that made no sense in their culture.

Don't get me wrong; I am grateful for living in this land, and yet, I also mourn for those who died in the process. As Joshua told Israel's history, he emphasized that it was not through their efforts with weapons of swords or bows that made their new life possible, even though they had fought many battles. Instead, God suggested they focus on how God had protected them rather than on celebrating their violent victories.

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Here's the choice Joshua invited the people to make: Choose this day whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors served? The gods of those living in this land? Or the God my household and I now serve? In a sense, I think he's inviting the people to change their ways: from the violent practices of their past to a new way of living, away from the violent practices of those living near them to a better way of life.

Don't we face that same choice each day? We can choose to get even with someone who has hurt our feelings, or we can let it go and offer a silent prayer for the one who has hurt us.

We could curse someone who cuts us off in traffic, but since we don't know what prompted the action, we could instead offer a silent blessing wishing the driver a better day.

We could ridicule or judge someone who lives a lifestyle different than our own, or we could pray for ourselves for a less judgmental attitude.

Many times a day we face choices as we encounter the challenge that Joshua invited his

followers to consider, "Choose this day whom you will serve."

That's something a U.S Senator from Indiana reflected on as he recalled the story of Daniel "Rudy" Ruettinger who dreamed of playing football at Notre Dame. Rudy's lack of good grades and money prevented him from attending the university, but with help from Father Cavanaugh, a priest at Notre Dame, Rudy enrolled at a nearby junior college.

Through testing Rudy discovered he had dyslexia, which affected his ability to learn. After studying hard and improving his grades and attempting several times to enroll at Notre Dame, he finally was accepted and tried out for the football team. After a series of setbacks and disappointments, Rudy finally got on the field for one play where he sacked the Georgia Tech quarterback and was carried off the field on his teammate's shoulders with cheers from the stadium. In reflecting on this movie, an Indiana Senator said:

One of my favorite movies is Rudy, about the University of Notre Dame. A priest tells Rudy

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that he knows for certain that only two things in life are true: 1) that there is a God and 2) that it is not he.

We need to exercise humility as we debate very contentious issues over the next two years. But true faith fills one's soul. It is our core being. We should not abandon faith at the door to the House floor. We should not leave the Holy Spirit in the cloakroom. We need to reflect upon this: Do you really want a world dominated by a United States not anchored in moral views?

I hope our decision will be — in the words of Joshua 24:15, “Choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the Senator made that statement thirteen years ago, I think the words apply to our nation today as we also face difficult choices over our next two years. We could enter into the political

arena with bitter words and divisive actions, or we can strive to hear both sides of the issues and work together toward a solution.

We could continue to build walls that separate us from one another, or we could choose to recognize that we're all one family, for as the choir reminded us this morning, when we find ourselves “weak and heavy laden, Christ comes” to us and says, “I choose you to be my beloved, I choose you to be my joy. I choose you to live with me forever; I choose you; I choose you.”

God has chosen all of humanity, and Joshua offers us the invitation, “Choose this day whom you will serve.”

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2005, House of Representatives Web Site, [souder.house.gov](http://souder.house.gov). as quoted on [Homileticsonline.com](http://Homileticsonline.com), 11-6-05.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodgins, Michael. *1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers* (Kindle Locations 1253-1254). Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #107 (adapted).

<sup>2</sup> Hodgins, Michael; (Kindle Location 726-732). Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #6.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Congressman Mark Souder, 3rd District of Indiana, Reflections at the Congressional Prayer Service, January 4,