**Sunday 4th September 2016 Message**

**“Choices” – you can make them**

Increase internally so that we can do exploits externally.

***Acts 1:15-26***

***In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus— he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." (With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, "'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "'May another take his place of leadership.' Therefore, it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles. NIV***

***Deut 30:19-20 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you, life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life,***

***NIV***

***Josh 24:15 then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve NIV***

***1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

***NIV***

**Introduction**

**Slide** – Life is full of choices

We are made in the image of God with the unique ability amongst everything else on this planet, to make choices. You have been given a powerful gift by God, that makes you like Him, that is the gift to make choices. Your gift is the ability to choose, to select, to decide, to prefer, to elect a particular path or course of action.

We are unique amongst all living things on this planet to have intellect to make choices. All other living things eat by instinct, mate by instinct, shelter by instinct. They do not make an intellectual decision as to what to eat, how much to eat, what partner to have, what colour their home should be, what mode of transport to take etc. You are unique, you have a brain, you have an intellect, and you can choose.

We are created and endowed by the Holy Spirit to make choices, in the image of God.

We make good choices and bad choices. Hopefully, we learn from our bad choices not to repeat them??? But all too often we choose sometime to our own detriment.

You are exactly where you are today, because of past choices you have made, good or bad.

A lot of our prayer life would not be necessary of were not sorting out the consequences of our bad choices.

Admit, you have made choices that have landed you in the \*\*\*, and you have said to yourself what on earth was I thinking when I decided to do that.

Whilst I am looking at a lot of wise people who have only become wise because they have experiences or seen the consequence of bad choices. You were not always this wise. You were just like some of those people you look at today and say “What on earth are they doing that for?” Selective amnesia chooses to forget the bad choices you have made.

Lord deliver me from making bad and stupid choices.

**Slide** Conditioned choices video.

Lord deliver me from following the world around me.

Today’s passage will help us look at the bad decision making process of the apostles, and the outrageous choices of God. Gods choices so often do not make sense, that’s why so often we choose to ignore Him, but I hope you are growing in faith to follow His choices and plans for your life even when they don’t make sense.

**Bad choices have bad consequences**

Before I delve into this morning’s text, let me underline why God has given us the Bible and the Holy Spirit. He has given them to us so that we know how to make good choices.

You can determine a better and more successful future by making good choices today.

Seek ye first, or just dabble in this? The dabble may have long lasting consequences you do not want.

Save yourself some tears, some sleepless nights, some fatigue and heartaches by smartening up your choices.

The partner we chose, church we chose, the house, the job, the university, the subjects we study, the friends we make, determined where you are now and where you are going.

As a pastor sometimes you hear accounts of people praying to the Lord for one thing, promising that if they get it they will serve the Lord even more faithfully. Then not too long after they have got what they asked for they are pleading to God to take it away. This is particularly true about relationships, “He’s so cute, Lord give me that man and I will love you for ever” 10 years later, “Lord you should have told me how bad he was when I met him, now will you get me out of this mess.”

It happens with other things, “I want that particular car it makes me look cool, and its cheap. Pleaaaaseeee Lord.” You get the car without any help from Him and it falls apart within a few months and costs you more to fix it than you originally paid for it, in order to keep what you really want. When the bailiffs turn up, you are on your knees again for help to get out of the mess you have gotten yourself into.

**Slide** - Bad choices

So much of our prayer time would be unnecessary if we did not make a bad choice in the first place. You could make better time in prayer asking God, what He wants you to do, and obey Him even when it does not make sense.

It’s easier to choose the right thing in the light, than in the dark. ***Genesis 2:16-17***. Freewill. Choose wisely by walking close to God.

We need to choose to think differently so we do not torment ourselves with the consequences of a bad choice.

Choose to think of things that are lovely and pure, rather than stressing and thinking about things you cannot change.

**The “god” of open options**

[***First Kings 18:21***](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%2018.21) describes a crucial moment of decision. It’s the final showdown between the God of Israel and a false god called Baal. Elijah calls God’s people to choose once and for all between the living God who delivered them, and this false god who has captured their affections: “‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ But the people said nothing.”

They seem unable, or unwilling, to make a choice. They want to hedge their bets, sit on the fence, and keep their options open.

How different are we in the 21st century? Would you prefer to make an ironclad, no-turning-back choice, or one you could back out of if need be? Do you ever find that you’re afraid to commit? Do you reply to party invitations with a “maybe” rather than a “yes” or “no”? Do you like to keep your mobile switched on at all times, even in meetings, so that you are never fully present at any given moment? Will you focus on the person you’re talking to after a church service, or will you look over their shoulder for a better conversation partner?

If so, you may be worshiping the god of open options

Some people they only go to stores with a guaranteed return policy, and it’s not unusual for a person to date someone for years before getting married — if they ever do get married. We reserve the right to keep our options open in every department of our lives, from sex to spirituality.

Psychologists say that we have developed this practice of keeping all options open because we believe it gives us more freedom, where in fact the opposite is true. We are so overwhelmed by the number of options that we cannot experience the joy of committing to anything or anyone.

If we thought about deciding to keep our options open, is actually choosing not to make a decision. This worship of the “god” of open options is killing us, killing our relationships, and killing our progress.

**The first big choice for the apostles, wasn’t Gods choice.**

In Acts the choosing of an apostle was their first time of making an incredible choice without Jesus direction. Jesus has left them and gone to heaven. They were full of power and were the lifeblood of the church, the church which was birthed and growing was going to need structure to be effective, and the remaining 11 had to find out how to do that.

Just before this important decision on structure for the embryonic church, there occurs the suicide of Judas. Because Judas committed suicide they have to make their first strategic decision. Judas had had the same opportunities as the rest of them, but Judas choose profit over purpose. For 30 pieces of silver (redemption), he sold out His redeemer for just 30 pieces when He was worth much more. The carnal mind looked at the short term gain, rather than the long term prize. By the time he realized that he had made the wrong choice, a bad choice, His redeemer was nailed to a tree and Judas suddenly realised he had betrayed the Lord with his bad choice.

Do you like thinking stupid Judas, what an idiot for making such a bad choice. BUT Have you ever betrayed the Lord with your bad choice. Is there a Judas in you?

Around the table Jesus said one of you will betray me. The other 11 disciples said “Is it I?” they knew there was a bit of bad decision making in all of them.

Wait a minute. I cannot afford to make another bad choice. Too old for it. Do not have the strength for it. Can’t face the fight to regain the ground.

The other 11 should have learnt from apostle Judas the following things

 Be careful who you bring on the team – you do not have to put everyone on your team

Purpose trumps profit –

Pray over the process not just the person – who told them to cast lots, why choose two and say which one God? There is a problem with the process and we copy it too frequently in the church. Don’t force God to vote for your candidate.

Don’t limit Gods choices to your ideas – He is smarter – God shows up not just in things that are there but also in the things that are not there. Sometimes you have to be comfortable with the empty seat, the no job, no mate, no car – wait on the Lord. Don’t rush to fill a space in your life with your idea.

(Matthias mans choice puts them in peril. What have you made the will of God. I had a dream of a man in Landrover, you are driving a Rover, think that’s close enough, this must be a sign I should marry you??)

Am I a bad person or am I just making bad choices

Manipulating and controlling people – sometimes we manipulate and try to control people so we get what we want, or they get only what we want them to get.

Gods wisdom is not your wisdom – stop trying to sort out problems, take your hands off, and God can take it back. Release it.

**Not Gods choice**

The person the apostles put forward had not track record, and did not impact the church of which we have any record in scripture. Chosen by men.

It is worth waiting for God to make a move, and make the choice.

Gods choices come with warning labels – you have to be a believer to get Gods choices.

Whilst the 11 were choosing Matthias, God was choosing Saul – a terror to the church and the most unlikely candidate. An assassinator. A terrorist in Jerusalem. A Christian killer. God found a man to promote to be a strong leader for the church. His warning my ways are not your ways, His thoughts are not your thoughts. He has a completely different perspective. It does not make sense. It is ridiculous, impossible, unattainable – stop listening to the devil – all things possible with God.

God sent Elijah to be sustained by a poor widow. Wait till Lazarus is dead before you go. Feed 5000 with a few loaves and fishes. Gods ways are mind boggling

God makes apparently outlandish choices (that’s because they are from a heavenly perspective) whilst we so often make bad choices. Will you go with your bad, logical choice, or try a God given outlandish choice and get the best miracle ever.

The things I worked hardest on yielded the least results.

When I stopped trying to push open doors and walked through ones God opened they bought the greatest blessing

Just think of Elijah’s words to Ahab in the drought. “Here comes the blessing – I see a cloud the size of a man’s hand?”

You cannot imagine how God is going to change the situation you are in, even if you have a plan. A house, A healing. A relationship. A reconciliation. An explosion of wealth. A baby in old age, a baby in a manger. Heal my eyes with spit and mud, A touch of a hem when I have seen doctors for 12 years.

**Concluding Comments**

Good choices are best made when you have the light of revelation.

**Slide –** Which way will you choose

**Slide** You have to make a choice, take a chance, to see change.

**Slide** – Nelson Mandela