

PENTECOST 14 (YEAR B)
AUGUST 26, 2018

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JOSHUA 24:1-2A, 14-18, JOHN 6:56-69

If, in the morning, I open my eyes,
My first decision thereupon lies.

Will I continue to lie in the bed,
Allowing my thoughts to run through my head?

Will I get up and go to the shower,
Regardless of both the weather and hour?

What of the children, who may want me to play?
What of the tasks that call me this day?

From the moment of waking, there are choices to make,
What will I give this day? What will I take?

I want to be saintly, say my first thoughts are of God,
But sometimes they're not and, in that, I'm not odd.

We may rise with the sun or maybe at noon,
And most of us promise to get with God soon.

Yet, that instant, a choice has been made-
The balance of time *against* God has been weighed.

We can't do it all. Surely God understands.
Did not God make this world, its chores, its demands?

But in each thing we choose, and it is *choose* we must
We have decided in which god we shall trust.

When we make decisions for work or for pleasure,
With money or time, talents or leisure,

With each small decision we leave or we make,
We all choose a god for each task's sake.

When Joshua says, "Choose this day whom you'll serve.
My household and I, from God we'll not swerve."

He means the God of justice and freedom,
The God who through the desert did lead them.

This God of providence, of mercy and manna
Compared to all others, She proved top banana.

For the Israelites, Joshua lays out a decision,
Because, in history, they'd treated God with derision.

Sometimes God seemed so far and so distant,
They struggled to find His mercy consistent.

Yet, who gave the manna? Who gave the quail?
Who brought forth the water when the people did wail?

"People of Israel," Joshua said,
"Turn all that you've known around in your head.

Think of the guidance through both day and night,
Think of God's grace. Think of God's might."

The people responded, "Our choice has been made.
We've looked around. It's the Lord who makes grade.

Only one God says, 'I am who I am'
The same God who was served by our dad, Abraham."

Israelites promised to serve God, what may come,
For richer, for poor, when happy, when glum.

The years passed, however, and memories faded.
People forgot this choice and became jaded.

The desert, the manna- they all became history.
What God's doing now... that became mystery.

It became easier to feel freed by law and instruction,
Only community's structure prevented destruction.

But that structure left some people wanting,
The gift of the law seemed rather daunting.

Late onto the scene, the rabbi, Jesus, appeared.
Some people rejoiced. Some people jeered.

Then, and again, he talked about bread
About life here right now *and* life after we're dead.

He healed sick people, he fed many others,
But his teaching confused both sisters and brothers.

What was this about flesh to eat, blood to drink?
A hard teaching to swallow, most people did think.

Said his disciples, "Jesus, this is enough.
What you're talking about- it's too much. It's too tough.

We don't like it. We don't understand.
We'd like to quit you, but it doesn't seem that we can.

We've looked around as to where we might go.
The problem is, there's some truth we *do* know.

Within a world of struggle and strife,
Only You have the words of eternal life.

Only you have offered hope in the future,
Between God and us, you are the suture.

Even though it grows quite hard to stay,
We cannot leave you or your way."

The disciples decided (or most of them did)
It was with Jesus that they placed their bid.

They decided, as their ancestors had,
To be on God's side couldn't be bad.

And so I say to you this day...
"Wait, Pastor Julia, I've something to say..."

"What is it, my child, what bothers you so?"
"Well, you've confused me. And so I must know

I thought God *chose* us. I thought it was done.
I thought the war's over. The fight has been won.

Didn't Luther write we'd never say yes...
Without God's Spirit, we can't acquiesce!

If you tell me, 'Today you must choose'
Are you not setting us up... to lose?"

You are right, my dear, in every way.
And yet you made a choice today.

You came to be here, to be in communion
To pray, to eat, to embody reunion.

Each day, we see gods far and near.
We can worship success. We can give over to fear.

We can spend our resources or over-honor our kin,
We can reverence our bodies from our toe to our chin.

We can make work our idol, honored, adored.
We can seek that which gives immediate reward.

But in the end, it all fails. It all becomes dust.
These idols- they'll fade, they'll die, they will rust.

In the end, what we need is something that lasts,
Something that goes beyond all other forecasts.

What can bring order to confusion and strife?
Only the hope of eternal life.

Eternal life, both for there and for here.
A growing, a knowing, a ridding of fear.

This is what Jesus offers- in body and blood.
Without that promise, bread and wine are just mud.

Like us, they're from dust and to dust shall return,
But through eating and drinking, still we can learn

That God has chosen in creation's favor,
The presence of Christ is what we savor

When we gather at table, both willing and able
To experience Jesus as the Truth and not fable.

To trust, to be open, is the choice we must make,
Each day, in the moment right when we wake.

In every moment, we choose a god to serve
With all that we have, each sinew and nerve.

Our God is a God on the side of all of creation,
Who knows and who loves without cessation.

Who gives us each talents, who gives us each gifts,
Who forgives our sins, who mends all our rifts.

Who with body and blood has chosen to feed us.
Who through valleys and o'er mountains, has chosen to lead us.

Lord, where could we go? You made us, you know us.
Now, through the Spirit, continue to grow us.

God has called you by name, so as your fear eases,
Choose your god every day. I recommend... Jesus.