

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Two Roads...

Lesson: Psalm 1

- ¹ *Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,*
- ² *but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.*
- ³ *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*
- ⁴ *Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*
- ⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*
- ⁶ *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

(Slide 1) One of my favorite poems is **The Road Not Taken** by Robert Frost. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. The poem goes like this:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.*

*Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
(Robert Frost, 1874-1963)*

Life is about **C** between **B** and **D**—in other words, life is about the **Choices** we make between **Birth** and **Death**. We make countless choices every day, from small decisions like what time to wake up, what to eat for breakfast, and what TV show to watch, to major ones like which school to attend, what career to pursue, or who to share your life with.

In my own life, I can see how many important choices have shaped who I am today. After graduating high school, I chose to go to college and major in the Philosophy of Religion. While at school, I had many part-time job options, but I chose to work as a staff member at the first Methodist church in Korea, founded by American missionary Henry Appenzeller. Later, while pursuing my Master of Divinity, I chose to serve as a student pastor at that church until I came to the U.S.

Through that ministry experience, I encountered God's grace in bringing people together across language, culture, and race, and I felt called to serve in multicultural ministry. This led me to pause my studies in Korea and choose to come to the U.S. for seminary. During that time, I also met my now-wife, Esther. She was displaying her calligraphy art at a café on my seminary campus, and I fell for her the moment I saw her. While I'm talking about life being about choices, I have to say falling in love with her felt more like destiny than a choice.

Anyway, I eventually chose Claremont School of Theology in Southern California. Before coming to the U.S., I chose to marry Esther, and we came here together. After graduation, I chose to serve in the Wisconsin Conference, which is how I'm here now, serving this beautiful church with all of you.

(Slide 2) Beyond these big life choices, I continue to make countless decisions every day. For instance, last Sunday, I could have chosen to rest at home after the service, but instead, I chose to join my family at a Fall Fest at a farm in Amery, and for the first time in my life, I rode a horse! My son especially loved it.

As fall approaches, many weekend events are happening everywhere, and people are making choices to attend them. Some of you might have been tempted to skip Sunday worship and fully participate in those events. But you made the choice to come here, putting God as your priority, to worship and praise Him. You made a great choice, and I want to commend you for that.

(Slide 3) Now, this might feel a bit “Korean,” but since your pastor is Korean, I’d like to ask you to greet those around you with eye contact and say, “I’m so glad you’re here. Your presence in this worship blesses me.”

There will be times when important family gatherings or events might cause you to miss Sunday worship. If it’s something that happens once or twice a year, I believe choosing to be with your family is a good choice. But other than those rare occasions, I ask that you prioritize being here on Sundays, because the choices we make create habits.

You might miss church once or twice because of unavoidable circumstances, but if it becomes a repeated habit, it could lead to a gradual drift from God and the church. Before long, attending church on Sundays might become something special you only do a few times a year, or less.

Last week, I shared how Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” and that each of us must have our own personal answer to that question. God meets each of us as individuals, and in that sense, our Christian faith is personal. However, even though our individual experiences of God may differ, we all believe in the same God. In that sense, our faith is communal.

Except for unavoidable circumstances, Christians should participate in the communal aspect of our faith—worship. Look around you. The people sitting next to you are your companions on this lifelong journey of faith. They worship God with you, and when you face difficult times, they will pray for you and visit you. To complete our journey of faith, we need each other.

Life is full of choices between **Birth** and **Death**. This idea comes from the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. He only went this far, though. He didn't tell us which choices are the right ones or which we should avoid. But the living Word of God, the Bible, tells us through the Psalms what choices lead to a blessed life and which ones we should avoid.

In Psalm 1, we are presented with two paths: one leads to a blessed life, and the other to a wicked life. Everyone has different ideas of what blessings are. Some may think of blessings as financial prosperity. But, true blessings are more fundamental and eternal.

Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night."

Which of the paths you've chosen in life do you believe brings you closer to God? The choices we make every day are key elements in shaping our relationship with God. At the end of our lives, the only thing that truly matters is Jesus Christ. No matter how much wealth we accumulate, we can't take any of it with us. The only one who grants us eternal life is God. The Bible tells us that a blessed life is one where we choose to draw near to God, to know Him more deeply by reading His Word, worshipping Him, and praying. A life full of these choices is truly a blessed life.

I bless all of you who chose to come to the house of the Lord and worship this precious Sunday morning. Your presence here blesses my life, and this worship we share together blesses my life.

Next Sunday, we will have a combined worship service for all generations. I hope and pray that you invite your families, children, grandchildren, neighbors, and even inactive church members to join us as we gather together to worship and praise God. This week, I also encourage you to make the choice to spend 10 minutes each day with God. Take time to read the Bible and pray, drawing closer to God through these moments. Thanks be to God.