

## Seven Simple Truths of Life:

*“Game Over- When it all goes back in the box”*

Matthew 5:3; 16:24-27

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### READ Matthew 16:24-27

Two weeks ago I read my last school book.

I wrote my last school paper.

And after 5 ½ years, next weekend I will attend my last school class.

Here is why I tell you that:

My last school paper is my credo.

It is written in the spirit of the Apostles Creed which states what the church believes to be core simple beliefs of a follower of Christ.

(If you don't remember what the Apostles Creed says you can find it on page 881 in our hymnals.)

Therefore my credo is to be a statement of my core simple beliefs as a follower of Christ.

Now I had some guidelines to follow, so my credo is longer than the Apostles Creed, but the same principles applied.

And here is what I found out after 5 ½ years of learning, 5 ½ years of reading some of the great classics and some not so great ones, discussing different theological viewpoints, typing papers until I felt like I had carpal tunnel and being exposed to beliefs that stretched me: Those core simple truths that I grew up believing, that I relied on when things were difficult, that I rejoiced and gave praise for when things were going well, those simple truths that have sustained me, redeemed me, and encouraged me, are pretty much the same core simple truths that I believe today.

Oh I have certainly broadened and deepened my beliefs.

However, when all is said and done, when all my books are put on my shelves, all my paper filed away, all my class time finished, I found I chose to still believe and be true to those simple truths that actually my mom taught me while I was growing up.

Simple truths – they tend to stay with us don't they.

[Simple truths like: Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.](#)

I probably learned this simple truth when I was 2 or 3 years old.

I believe simple truths stay with us because they are the truths we choose to believe, we choose to follow, we choose to accept and internalize, we choose to live our lives by.

Today I want us to look at three choices we get to make.

Three choices that really color every other choice we make.

Three choices that will set a pattern for our life, they will lay a foundation for our life.

Three choices that have eternal consequences.

## Choice

It is a great word.

It was one of my mom's favorite words.

She loved that she had a choice in her life, a choice on how to live her life, a choice in what truths to believe, a choice in who to serve and a choice in living a life that had eternal value.

I think it is one of God's favorite words.

I believe it is why he gave us free will.

Because he wanted us to choose to love him, to choose to follow him, to choose to believe his truths and promises, to choose to share his good news with others.

He wanted us to choose Him just as he chose us.

That is why CHOICE is such an important word.

Webster's dictionary defines CHOICE as –

the act of choosing, care in selecting.

We make choices every day don't we.

All day long we make choices in fact.

What to eat, what to wear, how to fix our hair, what to watch on TV, what book to read, what to listen to on the radio, whether to stay home or go out for the evening.

You get the idea.

And for a lot of those decisions we don't put a lot of thought or care in what we are selecting. Some we just do by habit.

We put more care and thought into making other decisions, life decisions, decisions that affect not only us but others as well.

What job to work at, what college to attend, who to marry, whether to have children or not and how many, what house to buy, where to live.

Whether choices are difficult and complex or simple and easy:

Choosing is central to humanity!

It is an important activity of our everyday lives.

The choices we make today affect tomorrow.

When you make one choice, it ends the potential of other choices in that particular area.

Whenever you say 'yes' to something, you are saying 'no' to other possible choices.

In the passage we read in Matthew, Jesus is basically telling his disciples that they have to make a choice.

They can choose to live their life for worldly success and recognition, satisfy their own desires and goals apart from God....or....

They can choose God.

If they choose God, they will not only have eternal life but they will have that fullness of life promised to those who believe.

Jesus is saying that we can choose God or we can choose Self.

The choice really is that simple.

**Love God ....or ....Love Self.**

You see, when we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life were all we have.

When in reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity.

What we accumulate here on earth has no value in purchasing eternal life.

"How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process?"

Jesus says.

Yet so often we are willing to sell our eternal values short for earthly security aren't we?

In the Bible, you will find the journal of a man who set out on an intentional journey to see if this life really could offer the ultimate satisfaction.

He denied himself nothing.

The record of his journey is called Ecclesiastes and the man's name is King Solomon.

Solomon had everything that we think is important by earthly standards.

He had money, fame, women, food and drink, power and prestige.

But listen to what he has to say about his pursuit to love Self.

*"I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."* Ecclesiastes 2:9-11

Nothing was gained under the sun.

Nothing on this earth, that is what is under the sun, this earth, was gained.

Yet he had everything we think is important by worldly standards.

Later in the book of Matthew, Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is and he answers:

*"Love the Lord your God with all heart, all your soul, and all your mind."*

We are free either to love God or not.

He invites us to love him. He urges us to love him.

He came that we might love him.

But, in the end, the choice is yours and mine. To take that choice from each of us, for him to force us to love him, would be less than love.

God explains the benefits, outlines the promises, and articulates very clearly the consequences.

And then, in the end, he leaves the choice to us.

**Love God ... or ... love Self.**

If we choose to Love God, Jesus goes on to explain in Matthew that the second most important commandment is to:

*"Love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Love others.**

If you are going to love God, you are going to love others because that is what God does, God is the author of true love.

God loves and redeems people and he wants you and me to love and redeem people.

**If you choose to love Self, then you are going to use others.**

Because that is how you get ahead in the world isn't it?

You use people to help you with your needs, to help you attain your goals, to help you get all you are after.

**Love others... or... Use others.**

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist faith, and George Whitefield were friends. Friends who happened to disagree on some theological matters.

George Whitefield was once asked if he thought he would see Wesley in heaven, Whitefield replied, "I fear not, for he will be so near the eternal throne and we at such a distance, we shall hardly get sight of him."

What a gracious and humble attitude George Whitefield had toward John Wesley even though the two disagreed about certain Biblical matters. You see they each loved God, loved others, and didn't want to hinder the preaching of the gospel.

That is what love does. Love is humble toward others.

Love is patient toward others. Love is not self-centered.

Love does not seek to control others or police others.

Love does not require perfection in others.

**Love others... or... Use others.**

And that third choice we have..

**To Serve others ... or... serve Self.**

In a few moments we are going to come to the Lord's table and partake of the communion elements.... The bread and the cup.

We are going to remember once again that last night that Jesus spent with his disciples before being crucified.

And on that last night, that night when Jesus had just a few more hours to be with his disciples, those whom he had loved and lived life with, I want you to look at what he did.

**READ John 13:1, 3-5**

**Jesus last act of greatness was washing his disciples feet.**

Think about that... Jesus last act of greatness, his last memory for his disciples, his last lesson, his last act was one of service out of love.

And he called his disciples to do the same, he calls you and me to do the same.

The last words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew tells us to serve others.

**Jesus says in Matthew 28: 19 –"Go and make disciples of all nations...baptize them...teach them."**

Basically he says serve them. Serve them out of love. Serve them out of love for God so that they too will learn to love God, love others and serve others.

Choices – we all get to make them.

Choices that establish a pattern,

Choices that set a foundation for life.

Choices that have eternal consequences.

King Solomon discovered as much in all his pursuits and he closes his journal in Ecclesiastes with these words:

*"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth....fear him...obey him...because some day you will stand before him."*

Because this is true, we must understand that, as one author put it, "Hell is the chosen place of the person who loves self more than God, who loves sin more than his Savior, who loves this world more than God's world. Judgment is that moment when God looks at the rebellious and says,

'Your choice will be honored.'"

**Love God ... or ... love Self.**

**Love others... or... use others.**

**Serve others...or... serve Self.**

You are going to spend your life on something, will it be something that has eternal value or not?

Charles Swindoll in his book, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, tells about a conversation someone had once with one of my favorite theologians, Karl Barth. Karl had just finished an extensive trip around the world. A trip where Swindoll says Barth had, "lectured among the learned, engaged in research on several continents, preached in great cathedrals, and witnessed sights that defied description. He had had time to walk along the shorelines of several majestic oceans, meditated in picturesque mountain scenes, met with numerous people of bright minds and impressive credentials. And upon returning to his homeland he was asked to state the single most profound thought he had considered during his travels. With a faint smile, the old gentleman responded: *'Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.'*"

Simple truths – they tend to stay with us don't they – for all eternity.