



Dear friends,

I wonder what choices or decisions face you this week...?

Just pause for a moment and notice if there are things you are wondering about this week – should I do this, or do that?

As I write, I have just been doing that very thing. I am having some online retreat time. Some time to pause and pray, and wonder with God. Some extended time to be still-(ish!) in the company of other pilgrims. As I enter my retreat, there are things on my desk which are undone. And I wonder...which of these can safely and appropriately wait until I 'return'...and which must be done before I can wholeheartedly engage with the time and space which is before me.

It is hard to choose. In this time of pandemic, I am aware that some of us have an excess of time to choose what we will do, within the confines of the current restrictions, and that choosing is hard. Others are finding a much-increased pressure on their time, and discerning what must be done and what can wait is hard. Some are facing excruciating choices: will I eat at this meal, or will I fast so my family have enough; will I commit time to my work (which is paying for our food and housing), or will I support my children in their home-schooling; will I visit my loved one with Covid at the end of their life, or will I protect others by staying away. We have recently faced hard choices about the appropriateness of opening buildings for public worship. It is hard to choose.

I wonder if those of you who spend regular time with scripture sometimes, like me, get 'stuck' in one passage for a while. Much of my reflection at present seems to be shaped by a recent Sunday with John 1: 35-51. Firstly, with that question the disciples ask Jesus, 'where are you staying?', a question which has overtones of so much more than 'what's your address?'. The word the NRSV translates as 'staying', could just as easily read 'remaining', or even 'where are you dwelling?'... 'where are you abiding?'. And then with the beginning of the next little passage, where Jesus 'decided' to go to Galilee. He wasn't sent, or driven...he decided... other options seem to have been available.

Maybe our courage to choose, both in the everyday, and in the acutely difficult and painful choices, might come in part from a habit of 'abiding' with God. That from practices of prayer and inner stillness, of worship alone and together, of holy conversation, might come the shaping which fits us for the challenges of life. Sometimes the way forward is obvious, but very often each potential path appears to hold both challenge and hope. Our dwelling with God, in honest, trusting and loving relationship, enables us to live with ourselves as we live in the consequences of the choices of each day.

And so I offer to you a favourite line of prayer from a setting of night prayer from *A New Zealand Prayer Book He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*:

"Lord, it is night...
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be."

May we each find the courage to trust the choices of each day to God, who loves us, and loves all creation. Amen

Peace, Jo