

Every day we make so many choices

when to get up

what to wear

what to eat for breakfast

maybe even how we are going to get to work  
that day

will we walk,

will we cycle,

will we take the bus

(pause)

At times it's hard having so many choices to  
make.

Jesus didn't make it easy for people to choose  
to follow him.

But he did make them choose

he did challenge them

and challenges us

what is your choice going to be

Are you going to stick with me

Are you going to keep following me

Or are you going to choose to leave like so many other of these followers of mine who are finding my teaching too hard

who are finding all that I have to say too hard to listen to,

too hard to believe

too hard to follow anymore.

(pause - new slide - change to keynote)

Let's pause for a moment of prayer before we get into looking at today's reading from John's gospel,

(pause)

Generous God, you always love us,  
always want the best for us,  
always inspire us to grow.

You offer us life in all its fullness, and give us  
the freedom to choose how we respond to you.

Help us to choose today to follow

Help us to choose like Simon Peter not to leave  
but to keep on following even when the  
teaching gets hard

even when the demands that you make on our  
lives are great.

(pause)

Knowing that you have the words that give  
eternal life

Believing in you

Knowing that you are the holy one who comes  
from God. **Amen**

**(new slide)**

You might want to take sometime and read the passage John 6.56-69 in your preferred translation

I'm going to read the John reading but from the translation called The Message

You may also want to read Joshua 24.14-18 which we will also make reference to

The famous verse from it anyway, verse 15

'As for my family and me, we will serve the Lord'

(pause)

**Here is the John reading from the translation called The Message**

By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. 57 In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me. 58 This is the Bread from heaven. Your ancestors ate bread and later died. Whoever eats this Bread will live always."

59 He said these things while teaching in the meeting place in Capernaum. 60 Many among his disciples heard this and said, "This is tough teaching, too tough to swallow." 61 Jesus sensed that his disciples were having a hard time with this and said, "Does this throw you completely? 62 What would happen if you saw the Son of Man ascending to where he came from? 63 The Spirit can make life. Sheer muscle and willpower don't make anything happen. Every word I've spoken to you is a Spirit-word, and so it is life-making. 64 But some of you are resisting, refusing to have any part in this." (Jesus knew from the start that some weren't going to risk themselves with him. He knew also who would betray him.) 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you earlier that no one is capable of coming to me on his own. You get to me only as a gift from the Father." 66 After this a lot of his disciples left. They no longer wanted to be associated with him. 67 Then Jesus gave the Twelve their chance: "Do you also want to leave?" 68 Peter replied, "Master, to whom would we go? You have the words of real life, eternal life. 69 We've already committed ourselves, confident that you are the Holy One of God."

## Reflection - (new slide)

Have we all ready committed ourselves to Jesus

and what does it mean for us to have committed ourselves.

Are we confident that Jesus is the Holy One of God

And are we willing to pay the price of following Jesus

Being committed to him

(pause)

This passage from John's gospel is interesting in that a lot of people who had been showing interest in Jesus

Who had been following him

Who had come to be known as one of his disciples have decided to give up

To stop following

To stop associating with Jesus as his teaching  
is to hard

Too tough to swallow.

(pause)

And interestingly, as well, Jesus doesn't seem  
to be to bothered that many people are leaving

He doesn't seem worried that so many folk are  
giving up in following Him.

He's concerned that the original 12 don't give  
up.

He wants to make sure that they are going to  
stick with him

But he doesn't seem so worried at all the others  
who are giving up

and he doesn't do anything to try and stop them

**(pause)**

Choosing to follow Jesus is not an easy choice,

Many of his first followers gave up early on

‘This teaching is too hard.

Who can listen to it?’

Do you want to give up Jesus asked them

And their answer was yes

And they walked away.

‘Many of Jesus' followers turned back and would not go with him any more.’

(pause - new slide)

The 12 didn't give up

Peter and the other chosen disciples didn't give up

Their response was ‘Lord, to whom would we go?’

You have the words that give eternal life.'

The 12 understood the challenge

They also knew that Jesus teaching was hard

was hard to follow

was hard to live by

But they were choosing to do it

To keep following even though it was not easy to do so

To keep believing even though what they were being asked to believe was so difficult

(pause - new slide)

We might struggle with the verse from the Good News Translation of the reading from John's gospel

'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them.'

As we don't have a sacrificial system within our worship

But the people listening to Jesus will have understood the references to sacrifice

Will have understood eating of the sacrificial meat

being filled with the God as they did so.

The problem for them

and for us

is Jesus saying that he is a God

Implying that he is God

and comes directly from God.

'The living Father sent me'

'whoever eats me will live because of me'

(pause - new slide)

It's all too much at this point

All too hard to believe

It maybe gets easier to understand after Jesus death and resurrection

After the Son of Man has gone back up to the place that he came from.

The place where he was before.

The resurrection is the guarantee of the claims Jesus is making here.

We can but hope and believe that many of those followers who turned away now turned back to Jesus then

Were able to come back to being followers after he rose

As they could then both understand

and accept what he was saying about himself.

(pause - new slide)

We may have doubts and questions,

And that's OK

Wrestling with faith doesn't mean we are judged and found wanting.

We are wrestling with how we are going to respond to the choice that Jesus lays before us.

Are you going to keep following me or are you leaving like all these other followers are.

Can we declare like Peter did

Will we stand and say

'Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life.'

(pause - new slide)

In one of the other readings from the lectionary this week Joshua offers the people of God a choice without any judgement.

He recalls the gods that their ancestors served and which the people around them follow.

And asks them - so who are you going to follow

Who are you going to serve

Then he makes his own profession of faith:

‘As for my family and me, we will serve the Lord’

A most well known line from the bible

‘As for my family and me, we will serve the Lord.’

Is that the choice you are making

To follow the Lord

No matter the cost

Will you also say like the people of Israel did

‘So we also will serve the Lord; he is our God.’

**(new slide)**

We have chosen to be his disciples

We have chosen to follow Jesus

No matter what that may cost us

We have chosen to stick with Him.

Let's continue to do so.

And declare with Peter and the other 11 first  
chosen by Jesus

'we believe and know that you are the Holy One  
who has come from God' **Amen**

(new slide)

**Let us pray**

Thank you, Lord, for your unfailing love.

Thank you that even with all our doubts and  
fears and worries about the journey ahead, you  
are there by our side.

(pause)

Where else can we turn?

To whom shall we go?

Thank you that you are our rock and our  
salvation,

our strength and our high tower.

(pause)

Thank you that as we choose to go on this  
journey with you,

as we make decisions and plans,

you are there,

gently leading and guiding,

always present.

We praise you, Lord, for your constant love and  
faithfulness.

(pause)

Lord, we bring to you the times we find it hard  
to be a Christian

When we find it hard to follow

When our faith is shaky

Strengthen us in our faith Father.

Make your Son very visible to us

(pause)

Lord, help us to be like Peter and know you as  
the Holy One of God.

Know that you are the source of eternal life.

May we live our lives as your disciples

and may our faith be shining out from us.

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**

(end keynote recording)

## **(Film this last bit)**

Do you want to go on in your life with Jesus

Have you committed yourselves to Him

Recommitted yourselves after all you've read  
and thought about here

You have chosen to stick with Jesus.

To be one of his disciples.

Let that be reflected in your whole life

### **Lets pray**

Lord Jesus Christ, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life,  
and we have come to believe and know  
that you are the Holy One of God.

Go with us into your world.

And may we live our whole lives as your  
disciples,

That others may see Jesus in us

And so to come to believe as we do. **Amen.**