

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The word of God that we consider today is from 1 Corinthians: *“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.”*

Did you know God is pro-choice? Now...before you call up the district office and report me, let me explain! Yeah, God is pro-choice but not in the way we tend to think of it. God gives us the freedom to make all kinds of choices. That’s the way he set it up for Adam and Eve in Eden. He told them, *“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden...except one.”* That leaves a lot to choose from! And that continues to be true.

Every day we are faced with lots and lots of choices. The moment we wake up, we have to choose – snooze or get up? What to eat for breakfast? What to wear? Some of our choices aren’t that big a deal but some will have big impacts on our lives and the lives of others. Who should I marry? Where should I live? What should we have for dinner tonight?! Sometimes I think we have too many choices. Researchers at Cornell University estimate that the average adult makes about 35,000 decisions **each day**.

This is all part of God’s design. We are blessed (or sometimes cursed) with freedom to choose in many areas of our lives. Just as he gave Adam and Eve, so he gives us almost infinite possibilities to choose from, so long as those choices fall within the boundaries of God’s commands.

Of course they don’t always. The curse of choice is not just that there are so many good choices but that we are also free to make bad choices. Our first parents chose to eat from that one tree God told them not to. Their choice led to death for themselves and all mankind. Having inherited the sickness of sin, we continue to make choices outside of God’s commands. We use our freedom to choose ourselves right into our graves.

But God also made choices; His choices brought humanity back from the brink of death. It was God who *chose* to give each of us life at the moment of fertilization. And God willed that that life should not be lost eternally. So he *chose* to save us. He did that by choosing to send his only Son from heaven to earth. Jesus *chose* to be conceived by the Holy Spirit, to be born of the Virgin Mary, to suffer under Pontius Pilate, to be crucified, to die and to be buried for us. And three days later, Jesus *chose* to rise from the dead for us.

God is also pro-choice in the matter of our redemption, only it is his choice, not ours that redeems us. God chose you. God chose me. Jesus says to his disciples, *“You did not choose me but I chose you.”* Why did Jesus choose us? Because we Christians are superior to others? No! Quite the opposite. The Apostle Paul made that point stingingly clear when he referred to the Christians in Corinth as stupid, weak, and of low birth. When God called you, *“not many of you were wise...not many of you were powerful, not many were of noble birth,”* at least, not by the world’s standards. Interestingly, the Greek word translated “noble birth” is *eugeneis*, where

we get the English word eugenics – “well-born” or having “good genes.” Thankfully God does not value us based on our IQ, our net worth, our position in society, or our genetic makeup.

What is it that makes a life valuable? There was a good deal of debate in the Supreme Court last month over the term “viability.” It is argued that when an unborn baby becomes viable – able to survive outside the mother’s womb – it is at that point that the state has a compelling interest in protecting the baby’s life. If a life has to be viable to be valuable, that’s a ghastly benchmark isn’t it? How many people do you know and love who would not be able to survive without medical intervention or care of some kind? Are their lives expendable? According to a strict definition, none of us is really “viable.” We all depend on others and ultimately on God to survive. **But God does not value us because we are viable. We are viable because God values us.** God had a compelling interest in our lives before our lives began. We have life because God chooses to give it and sustain it.

The world assumes certain people’s lives matter more – those who are wealthy, accomplished, influential, and attractive – of course they matter. Paul goes out of his way to affirm that the simple, the weak, and the lowly matter to God. That’s why even though a slogan like “all lives matter” is true, it doesn’t make the point as strongly as when we single out those the world deems expendable. So I think we should have the courage to get specific and say, “Black lives matter, unborn lives matter, people with disability’s lives matter, utterly weak and dependent lives matter,” which means our lives matter too.

The world may place Christians into that category of lives that do not matter. As Paul says – foolish, weak, not of noble birth, things that are not. The world may count us as “nothings” and “nobodies.” But God’s call turns the tables on the world and its values. His called ones, his saints, are not “nothings.” We are people God has chosen and endowed with his own wisdom, power, and even a noble birth – having been born from above in Holy Baptism and made royal heirs of his kingdom. God chose us, the ones the world considers “nothings” to shame the *so-called* wise and strong, the *so-called* “somebodies.” As the Blessed Virgin put it, *“He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.”*

Why does God do this? Why turn everything upside down? It is not an evil thing to have wisdom or to be powerful, or to be born into nobility. Paul says God exalts the lowly so that no one may boast in the presence of God. The evil comes from putting our confidence in these things; thinking that some lives are more valuable than others because they check certain boxes – whether that be viability, employment, marriage, accomplishment, or anything else. Paul is trying to tear down any reason we might *think* we have to come up to God and say, “Look at me.” Because none of us can boast. If we haven’t chosen one sin, we’ve chosen another.

One in four women has an abortion in her lifetime – and that is true of Christian women too. If you are one of those – God still chose you; God still forgives you; God still loves you. Here’s another statistic: four in four women and four in four men have made destructive, evil choices that have brought death to ourselves and others. God chose you; God forgives you, God loves you. In spite of our choosing disobedience and death, **God still chose us.** God is the one choice that in our sinful state, we could not make. So we don’t get to boast about how strong our faith is or how we “decided to give our lives to Christ.” We did not choose him. He chose us. Jesus gets all the glory. And that’s the whole point. We are not wise, righteous, holy, or capable of redeeming ourselves. Rather, in love, Christ has become our wisdom. Christ has become our righteousness. Christ has become our holiness. Christ has redeemed us from the death we chose for ourselves. *“Therefore let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”* The Lord has chosen you and given you life. You are precious from fertilization to forever.

We’ll close with a hymn stanza by Martin Franzmann that is actually a prayer. Let us pray:

O God, O Lord of heaven and earth,
Thy living finger never wrote that life should be an aimless mote,
a deathward drift from futile birth.
Thy Word meant life triumphant hurled in splendor through Thy broken world.
Since light awoke and life began, Thou hast desired Thy life for man. AMEN.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.