

Is 12; Is 65:17-25; 2 Th 3:6-13; Lu 21:5-19

The famous baseball player, Yogi Berra, was a great catcher and hitter for the New York Yankees. He is quoted as saying, “When you come to the fork in the road, take it.” It seems non-sensical. Actually, it can have an array of meanings – leaving each of us to apply it to our own process of choosing between two ways. The great Yogi also said, “It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future,” and “You can observe a lot by just watching.”

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. *The Road Not Taken*
by Robert Frost(poetryfoundation.org)

In a very ordinary way, the poet describes the choice a hiker makes on a ramble through the woods. It doesn't seem to be fateful or life changing. Yet we see that the hiker has a feeling (s)he will never come that way again. We feel the importance of the moment. (S)he takes the trail with fewer footprints – less trampling of the grass and fall leaves.

Frost tells us the way he chose he chose as being **just** and as being **fair**. What is this? Just a brief historical note here. When Frost was young, a man could choose to go to any number of wars, the Polish-Soviet War against Communist aggression, the Irish War for Independence from

colonial Britain, and many more. There was also an immense surge in cultural and artistic expression all around the world. Which would you choose – heroism or self-expression? How do we choose the best way? How do we choose the way most pleasing to God? This is the real question.

Our Scripture readings for today describe two different paths to the future. You are getting two stories here. In the time we have this morning, we must unpack these roads in outline only. The Isaiah Scripture is from his Book of Consolation. That is, the later chapters of the prophet's writing. After all the turmoil of Judah's disobedience, idolatry and exile there will be a day when God will reconcile all things to God's self. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox." (Is 65:29) A time of peace and joy. Heaven.

Jesus is teaching wisdom and prophesying about the temple in Jerusalem. Remember Herod the Great refurbished and expanded the temple complex to be a beautiful, splendid sight. He spared no expense. We catch up with Jesus and

His disciples as somebody is commenting on how glorious and impressive Herod's temple is. And Jesus bursts this bubble of admiration by telling them and us "the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another, all will be thrown down." (Lu 21:6) Days of woe are just ahead – in about forty years when the Romans destroy the city, the temple and both the Jewish and Christian way of life, because of political uprising. There will be a great people-movement out of Jerusalem – out of Palestine – into the wider world. As Jesus tells His disciples, persecution will "give you an opportunity to testify." (v 13)

Life takes us through deep trouble, war, persecution, famine, displacement – and through times of peace, prosperity, community and joy. Life goes on. How do we choose the way to take? Will we simply seek the path of least resistance? Will we always avoid controversy and trouble?

Choosing to follow Jesus is to take the road less traveled. We hope for a future with meaning for us and for those we care about. Don't you and I want to work for a world that is just and fair? This calls for wisdom. Jesus is saying that

troubles will overtake His followers, because of His name. To choose Jesus, the Way the Truth and the Life is to choose a more challenging journey. And not choosing is a choice. Everybody must choose. Jesus offers us words of wisdom. Jesus says “Here is how to navigate what is ahead for those who are Mine”:

“...don’t worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you. They will even kill some of you. And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But not a hair of your head will perish! By standing firm, you will win your souls. (Lu 21:14-19 NLT)

What Lord? Don’t worry? Trust You alone? This is Jesus’ promise. Choose between two roads. You may think your odds are 50-50, but they’re not. Blaise Pascal was a 17th c mathematician and philosopher. He fell in love with Jesus and became a strong witness for faith. He posited that either God is, or God is not. You cannot prove either one. If you think this is a game of

heads or tails, you can guarantee you will win. Here's how. Pascal's Wager: If God is, and you believe in Him, you win everything – all the promises – all the goodness of eternal life in His presence. If you lose, you lose this mortal life. You can't hold onto it in any case.

Some choose to bet that this is all there is and God does not exist. Instead, bet that God exists and rewards those who believe in Him. The chance of loss is finite. The chance of winning is infinite. Once you're sold out to Jesus, then speak up for the Savior of the World. Celebrate His wonderful gifts. Speak His name. He promises He will never put you to shame.

Jesus promises those who love Him **words and wisdom** at just the right moment – just when we need to speak – we will be given everything that we require. Amen.