

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 *or*
 ben Sirach 15: 15-20
Psalm 119: 1-8
I Corinthians 3: 1-9
Matthew 5: 21-24 (25-37)

TWO WOLVES

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An aged Cherokee is teaching his grandson. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “A terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, cheating.”

“The other is good – she is joy, love, hope, serenity, kindness, generosity, truth, and compassion. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every person.”

The grandson thought for a minute and with a look of concern asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old man simply replied, “The one you feed.”

anonymous traditional fable

The Old Testament writer, Jesus ben Sirach, shared similar wisdom.

“You can choose to do good, or to do evil;
you have the choice to follow the Commandments or not.”

In his last speech to the people of Israel, the prophet Joshua
lays the same admonition to choose between life and death,
“As for me and my household,” he says, “we will serve the Lord.”

And the people responded enthusiastically,
“We would never leave the LORD to serve other gods!”

It is all a matter of choice - and the choice is ours.

In the early to mid-20th century, a form of Christian understanding
called Process Theology developed.

Without getting too deep into the thoughts of Alfred North Whitehead,
John Cobb, and my hero Tielhard de Chardin -

 you can convince me to have Lenten dinners
 over a discussion of Process Theology.

Process Theology looks both at the nature of God,
and for today’s meditation, the nature of us humans.

In simple terms, God is not immutable, unchangeable, a marble statue,
but is a loving, evolving, emotive being.

And we mortals are given choices.

The ‘process’ of our growth is given in each and every moment.

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A moment is not just a shortest period of time,
it is an element of time of great significance.
And each moment of my life there is a choice.
God presents a 'Yes' and a 'No,'
always urging us more and more to the right side.
'Yes.'
'No.'
Yes, you got it, we most often choose the 'No.'
Thus it takes us longer and longer to get back to the right side.
Sadly, some never make it,
sliding further and further down Dante's spiral towards *Inferno*.

Old Cherokee describes the one wolf with:
anger, envy, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, cheating.
And the other who carries on her back:
joy, love, hope, serenity, kindness, generosity, truth, and compassion.
I think of those old cartoons
where I have one demon on the right shoulder -
was it the right??
and the angel on the left -
or is my perspective backwards?

Choose life or death - good or evil.

You here have chosen the former.
You have come to the life of Christ Resurrected.
You have chosen life.
But that doesn't mean that the other wolf doesn't gnaw at your heel.

Now, I have to share one great sorrow that I hold -
particularly from my musical and linguistic backgrounds,
and the stigmatism we give to those not like us.
How many of you are predominately left-handed?
Do you know that in keyboard music,
when the left hand is to play a certain passage,
it is designated as *man sinistra* in Italian, the sinister,
or in French *main gauche*, as in "oh, how crude!"

It seems a simple slight of term,
but how it throws those minorities of our society into the trenches.
My best friend in school was forced, like you, in elementary school
to ignore his native tendency
and write abnormally with his right hand.

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It was a terrible struggle which demanded much of his energy
which could have been expended elsewhere.
Yet, what can I say, Doug graduated as Valedictorian of our class!
Was he sinister?
Yeah, because he beat me - by a lot!
But then Doug was the brain,
I was the musician,
and still friends after all these years and miles apart.

Evil or Good.
You choose.

Simple slights of terminology.
Little jabs at seeming jokes.
Big tweets.

Or:

Small gifts of humanity.
A gentle word of comfort.
A kindly "Hello" to a stranger on the street.

What does it take for you to feed the right wolf?
Not much,
and yet so much:

To love the Lord our God with all your being -
heart, soul, body;
To love your neighbor -
with your brain, your thoughts, your mouth, and hands;
as you love yourself - as God has made you,
with repentance and forgiveness in and of yourself
and with joy and hope

In the process of becoming who God has hoped for you to be.
God *is* changeable.

And so, the Spirit prays, you are changeable as well.
But you *have* come here as one who has chosen life!
Allow God to help pull you each and every moment,
every turn of significance in your life -
and every moment is a time of significance -
allow God's Spirit to pull you to the 'Yes,'
and feed the right wolf within you.

AMEN,

CHILDREN'S SERMON

a pizza, sliced

We just heard Jesus talk about fighting with your brother or sister.
I knew a couple of kids who would fight with almost anything.
Donut holes really hit the mark!
But I saw them attack each other with slices of pizza.
Can you imagine that?
Well, there is a sharp point, but it won't do much damage, fortunately.
And what's the first thing you bite off on your piece of pizza?
Of course, the tip.

Silly - fighting your brother or sister with a pizza.

Pizza,
No sharp edges, and tasty, and sharing slices - plus good nourishment!
Now donut holes - that's different.
Especially if your sister or brother hit you with a chocolate one!

Let's pray:

Jesus, each day is like a pizza with many slices in it. Help us each time we take a piece of our day to bite off the sharp edge of that moment, so that no one is hurt. And then let us share a slice of goodness with someone who is hungry in one way or another.
Amen.