

Joshua 24:14-15
Psalm 119:57-64
1 John 3:16-19
JOHN 20:19-30

The “Choose Jesus Adventure Game”
(Interactive Sermon with kids at 10:30 on
Vacation Bible School Celebration Sunday)

I'd like to invite the kids to come up front to help me with this sermon. Now, some of you were a part of Vacation Bible School, right? [Hands go up.] And some of you weren't, and some of the grown-ups and teen-agers were at Vacation Bible School (hands raised in the congregation) and some of them weren't, but how many of all of us can be on Jesus' team? (“All of us.”) That's right, and *all* of the kids up front can help to teach all of us today. Anybody here ever play the board game, “Chutes and ladders?” Well, today we're going to play a game that's like that, except that the entire sanctuary here is the “game board”, so we're going to walk around the game board. This is the “Choose Jesus Adventure Game,” and it's all about making choices. We can all help each other make good choices, because **faith is a team sport!**

Let's “start” where it says “start”. (A couple of the kids find and stand on the “start” sign’.) First, close your eyes, and imagine you're holding hands with Jesus – because you are, whether you can always feel his hand or not. [I quote one of the Vacation Bible School songs:] “It's a wild ride sometimes in life. You got choices to make. Will you make ‘em right? Well, get on, buckle up. Get ready for the ride of your life.”

O.K. Let's open our eyes and go to our first choice. [The choices are taped to the pulpit, and other choices are around the edge of the sanctuary. The choices are on cardboard on top, and when flipped up they reveal what the person who makes that choice has to do. Kids take turns reading the choices and what we'd have to do aloud, then I repeat each over my clip-on microphone so everyone can hear.] On one square it says, “Choose to believe in Jesus.” On the other square it says, “I believe in getting MY way ALL the time.”

Which one will we choose? (“Jesus.”) O.K., if we choose to believe Jesus, let's see what it says underneath this card that we can do. “Take 15 *giant* steps forward together.” Now – before we do that, is anyone curious to see what we would have had to do if we had made the other choice? (“Yes.”) Let's lift that card up: it says “Lose next turn.” O.K., since we *chose* to believe in Jesus, we can take 15 giant steps forward together to the next choice.

The next choice is “Diss people who are different from you” OR “Share Jesus' love with everyone.” (“What does “diss” mean?” “Disrespect.”) Which will we choose? “Share Jesus' love with everyone.” O.K., we'll choose that, but first let's see what we would have had to do if we had made the other choice. (Underneath it says, “Take 15 giant steps backward.”) But since we *chose* to share Jesus' love with everyone, we can [I flip up the card up and a child reads] “Take 15 giant steps *forward*.”

[This is a follow-up of the story of Jesus healing 10 lepers in Luke 17:11-19, studied during VBS.]

The next choice is, “Give up when it’s hard to help someone”, OR “Help those in need even when it’s hard.” Which shall we choose? (“Help those in need.”) O.K., but first let’s see what we would have had to do if we made the other choice. (“Sing ‘Better give up now, better give in now’ [part of a VBS song] 100 times *and* lose next turn.”) But we *chose* to help, so we open the cover and read, “Carry a friend up over this table” and advance to the next choice.” [A couple of the children gently carry one of the smallest children over the table, mimicking the story in Mark 2:1-12, one of the Bible stories read during VBS. As we walk, I sing another part of a VBS song, “Don’t give up now. Don’t give in now. There’s a way he’s gonna see Jesus.”]

The next choice is “Refuse to forgive others” OR “Receive God’s gift of forgiveness and forgive others, too.” If we choose to refuse to forgive we get...”Return to START.” Wow, all the way back there. But if we choose to “receive God’s gift of forgiveness and forgive others too,” we get “Advance to next choice while singing, ‘Amazing grace’” [The whole congregation joins in singing the first verse of ‘Amazing grace.’]

Our next choice [based on the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-27, another story studied in VBS] is “Refuse to share” OR “Obey Jesus and give generously.” Which shall we do? Well, if we had chosen to “refuse to share”, we would have gotten “No one else will play with you. Lose next turn.” But we chose to obey Jesus and give generously, and we get “Jesus shares what he has with you! Take 25 giant steps forward while singing “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” [the congregation joins in the singing].

And our final choice – for right now – is: “Chose MY way ALL the time,” OR “Choose Jesus as Savior and Lord.” If we choose “MY way ALL the time”, what do you think we get? “Lose next turn.” But – if people make that choice, after they lose their turn, they get *another chance* to make the right choice. How about if we choose Jesus as Savior and Lord? [Underneath that choice is] “Keep loving, forgiving and giving as you walk with Jesus toward eternal life with him.”

Wow! What great choices you made! Remember, these choices and others are there for *all* of us *all* the time, not just in the church building and not just during Vacation Bible School or on Sundays, which is why our final stop is on the way out of the building, because when you leave here the Choose Jesus Adventure Game is *just beginning!* After all, Jesus told Thomas [in another story we studied] that Jesus is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” So let’s all choose to believe, choose to act, choose to forgive, choose to obey and choose Jesus all week and all year!

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St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
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