

# Your Best Yes

Week 3 December 16<sup>th</sup> 2018

“Share”

Welcome to the third week of a series we are calling “Your Best Yes.”

It hardly needs saying,  
it’s a complete cliché to say it at all  
but we are probably already  
in the thick weeds of the most hectic time  
of the whole year  
a *time* that will fly by in no *time* at all  
while *sometimes* feeling  
like it will never come to an end.

Whether you like it or not  
we’re all in the same boat  
with limited time and resources,  
facing everything that will be coming our way  
over the next few weeks.  
And as we have already said,  
here’s the problem: *It is all good.*

It is all good...but it doesn't always all fit, especially since the rest of life proceeds more or less as usual.

We've still got to do everything and deal with everything we're currently dealing with -that does *not* go on hold, ----or go away just because of the holidays are here.

That's part of the problem.

The other part of the problem is, it can be difficult to know what to do, and then what to do next, and, of course, what not to do at all.

It is a good problem.

It means we are blessed in many ways with many things. But it is a problem *nonetheless*. All the good stuff can start to feel like pressure.

Maybe there is no avoiding the business.  
But we don't have to be anxious,  
angry, or annoyed.

There is a big difference between being busy  
and being anxious, angry and annoyed  
because we're busy.

And if you think about it,  
if you step back and think about it,  
the holiday season  
is like a microcosm for the whole of life.  
Because the whole of life  
is an ever-changing menu of options  
and choices and decisions  
that just keep coming our way,  
and, regardless of whether we are  
deliberate or thoughtful about it,  
what we're doing with those options  
and choices and decisions  
is determining the quality and direction  
of our lives.

What we need is a *strategy*.  
We need a plan, for the holidays for sure,

but really moving forward into the New Year,  
for more sustainable, successful living in 2019.

Last week, we laid out one such strategy.

It's called

## Discernment

Discernment is about judgment,  
but not just decision making,  
it is much more about sensitivity  
and even shrewdness  
when it comes to decision making.

Discerning not just the good from the bad,  
But the good from the greater good,  
And the greater good from the greatest good.

We said that God actually  
wants to get involved  
and really can help us out when it comes  
to making good and great decisions  
*in* life and *about* life.

- He wants us to make positive, healthy, life-giving choices.
- God wants to lead us down the path of abundant life.
- He wants us to see every day of our life as a gift from him and not just something we need to get through.

So many people approach the Christmas season as something to get through.

That's not how God wants us to live. We will find the best yes when we invite God into our decision making process.

Discernment is also about understanding we do have a choice.

We always have a choice.

God made you free to make decisions

You have the capacity to choose.

He made you *capable* of discernment.

So often we act like we have no choice when it comes to what we have to do, especially at Christmas.

When we only act or make decisions out of an obligation and a sense of duty there's every chance we're working *against* our own personality types working against who God made us to be in ways that are probably self-defeating. In ways that are acting against God's will or what God desires for us.

You choose to say yes.  
Just like you can choose to say no.  
And the best way to know when to say yes and when to say no is to base your discernment in love.

That's really what this series is all about,  
Discernment in Love

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Over the course of this series  
We're looking at how we can grow  
to love God, love others  
and, inspired by that love,  
make disciples through our very best yes.

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Last week we talked about loving God  
by trusting him.  
To really love God is to trust God.

Today we want to look at the second part  
how to grow in Love for others  
and we have a simple answer  
when it comes to that too as simple as can be.

To help us out  
we are going to look at a passage  
from Luke's Gospel,  
which we began to look at last Sunday.

These readings are the traditional ones  
for Advent.

Luke introduces us to John the Baptist  
cousin of Jesus who had been chosen by God  
to be a preacher and prophet.  
He is usually considered the last and greatest  
of all the prophets in the Bible.

His message, as we saw last week:

<sup>4</sup> *as it is written in the book of the words of the  
prophet Isaiah,*

*“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:*

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.*

<sup>5</sup> *Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;*

<sup>6</sup> *and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”*

Luke 3: 4-6

Whenever a king,  
or some powerful and important person  
was expected somewhere  
workman would go before him  
to do roadwork.

They would smooth out the rough patches  
make the crooked ones straight  
generally creating a clearer, easier path  
so that the king's arrival  
would be faster and more efficient.

The king John is anticipating was Jesus,  
whom John recognized as the king of kings  
the Son of God, the long awaited Savior  
who was to come into the world.

The illustration of the roadwork is a metaphor  
for a kind of spiritual preparation.  
John himself called this spiritual preparation  
*repentance*.

The word *repent*  
is all about three things really:

A change in thinking  
which leads to a change of heart  
which eventually leads to a change in behavior

John was rather like a rock star.  
Huge crowds of people were attracted to him  
to hear him speak and when they did  
they were moved to repentance  
and, subsequently, baptism.

Their change in thinking  
and change of heart  
lead them to reexamine their behavior.

So, they ask, obviously enough,

*<sup>10</sup>... "What then should we do?"*

**Luke 3: 10**

His answer probably disarmed many of his  
listeners, for its sheer simplicity.

He says,<sup>11</sup> ... *"Whoever has two coats  
must share with anyone who has none;  
and whoever has food must do likewise."*

**Luke 3: 11**

His profound prophetic instruction is basically  
the same encouragement

That I gave to my God Children  
as they grew: share.

Simply share what you have.

If you have extra...

If you have more than you need...

Share with those who have less than you.

Share with those who don't  
have anything at all.

We see it clearly when it comes to children,  
but sometimes as adults we forget.

This was my experience 2 weeks.

There was two young woman at Sobey's  
colleting money for fill the bus charity.

I was impressed that this young ladies  
would be willing to stand out in the cold  
and so articulately make his pitch to passers-by,  
most of whom completely ignored them.

I said I would get them on the way. On my  
way out I open my wallet and I had a 5 and a

10. I actually started to reach for the 10 and impulsively gave him the 5 instead.

Of course I spent more than that inside Sobeys

Often times we just stifle the thought of sharing and giving, it is so ingrained in us to hold onto stuff instead.

That's why it is really a spiritual issue that is part of the process of repentance John talked about.

Changing our thinking, to change our feeling, to change our behavior.

A basic way in which we love one another is by sharing.

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The Christmas season is above all

the *season* of sharing.

And sometimes it is most compelling  
when it is done for people we don't even know,  
people who may never repay us  
or even thank us.

Every year at Christmas  
we give the parish opportunities to give.  
The Shoe Box Campaign and the Giving Tree,  
These have been very successful over the years,  
because of your generosity.

The Out Reach for Justice Committee  
Also this year  
is once again giving you an  
opportunity to be a part of  
a special mission trip.

For those who our new to our parish  
This mission effort has been organized  
and run by Katherine and Jeff Ducharme  
and family with some other dedicated  
people over the years.

This mission effort  
is found in the country of Malawi, Africa,  
in a primitive village called Njewa.

You, the people of Good Shepherd  
in the past have generously assisted  
in the building of a primary school  
for orphaned and marginalized children,  
who would never have the option  
to attend school otherwise.

The school is well established  
and is now recognized  
by the government as following  
the proper curriculum  
and the students are taught in English.  
This means that as the students graduate  
from grade 8,  
they will receive an official diploma.  
There are now 450 children  
attending the school  
and they celebrated the first grade 8 graduation  
this past June.

You are helping to raise children  
to transform their nation.

The village is predominantly Christian  
and the chief is actually Catholic.

All of the children in our school  
have their own bible.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries  
in the world,  
where faith is what often keeps people going.

You are helping to grow disciples  
even in Africa!

Other points Katherine asked me to share.

- In 2007 (the first trip to Africa)  
they built the first school structure  
with a team of people

and a group of villagers that assisted.

- In 2008, just Jeff and one of our daughters  
returned and built an adjacent structure  
with 2 more large classrooms  
with assistance from some of the villagers.

- They have built a shelter where volunteers come daily to cook the meal for the students over an open wood fire. The first two years, they were not able to prepare food during the rainy season, so no meals were served during this time.
- Katherine has now secured a feeding program so that each student receives a hot meal of fortified porridge daily.

This has eliminated the prevalent problem of malnutrition in the school. It is so much easier for the students to learn when there is food in their belly.

The Ducharme team are looking for anyone who may be interested in being a part of a team that will be going in late spring or early summer of 2019. Dates to be confirmed in the near future.

The team will be taking on a couple of improvement projects for the school such as building desks, painting classrooms etc.

In addition, a medical project to meet the current needs is being put together and those that wish to help here may do so. If you feel you may not have the skills to help with these projects, you will be prepared and guided through the projects that Katherine sets up and that you wish to help with.

Katherine shared with me that this trip is very humbling as you realize that these very poor and uneducated people are really no different than us, in that they love, they laugh, they cry, they share, and they suffer. They are often hungry,

yet will share what little they have.

To hear these children sing  
and watch them dance,  
and share their hugs  
you realize our lives are not so different.  
The only real difference is  
where each of us were born.  
This will be a life altering experience  
as it is in giving and serving others  
that we receive.

People pay their own way,  
but will receive an income tax receipt  
for the full cost of their trip.  
Any donations go 100% towards  
the projects for the children.

To find out more,  
We have Katherine Ducharme's  
information in today's bulletin.  
( or speak with her after Mass today)

Probably most of us are familiar  
with John the Baptist  
and his role in the Christmas story.  
every year we are use to hearing  
his announcement  
to prepare and to share.

But we shouldn't allow the *familiarity*  
of the message  
to mask the *impact* of the message.

John's announcement concerns  
the advent of grace and truth  
that is the coming of Christ.  
And that coming changes everything.  
At least it can.

This Christmas forget the anxiety,  
anger, anxiousness.  
Invite the grace and truth of Christ  
into your busyness.

Choose to give God your best yes.