

Introduction coffee...

I went out for coffee in Durham...

Latte? Macchiato? Cappuccino? Espresso? Americano?

Long, short, tall, grande, large, extra large,

one or two shots, hot milk, cold milk, chocolate on top?

It took 10 minutes to choose and almost as long to order...

In the end I went for the fairtrade, neat black option.

Job Done.

Today we have LOTS of choice in our lives,

and lots of choices to make.

Every choice we make has consequences- sometimes they don't matter very much, but very often, they do.

I want to tell you a story about Sam, who made choices.

Evie comes forward

Sam was given **ten apples** by God....

These apples remind us of ALL the good things God gives us- in fact, everything we have is a gift from God, isn't it?

When God gave Sam these very special apples he told her that she could use them to exchange for all the things she needed to live.

But he also said she should put one apple aside,

straight away, to give to God, to say thank you in a way

- and she could do this by giving it away, to help other people in need.

Remember that bit please...

Well, first of all Sam decided she needed a place to live.

She took 3 apples and used them to rent a nice flat *keys*

Then she took 3 apples and exchanged them for a coat to keep her warm and dry and safe (*fluorescent jacket*)

Then she took 3 more apples to the farmer and exchanged them for milk and other lovely food to eat. (*milk carton*)

Now she only had one apple left. She wondered what she should do with it...**Any ideas?**

Well Sam sort of remembered what God had told her, to put it aside to give back to him, but she figured that he'd made all the apples anyway and there were probably plenty for everyone.

SO she decided to eat it.....And she gave God the core
(*Sam eats apple, others back in basket.*)

THANK YOU to those taking part

I don't know what you think about that story, and the choices Sam made. She did some very sensible things with the special apples God had given her.

But she chose **not** to do the most important thing- she chose not to share or give, and she chose not to put God first...

Can you see how this story connects with our Bible reading?

The Samaritan who was healed went back to Jesus to say THANK YOU **first**, and then he went home for a party.

The others probably *meant* to say thank you, but they were so busy celebrating that they forgot... or perhaps they started to take their healing for granted or even thought they'd done something to deserve it?

But the one who came back, he knew he had no right even to be talking to Jesus, because of his illness, let alone to a Jewish teacher, when his people were enemies of the Jews.

He said THANK YOU first and he knew that his whole life, set free now from such an awful illness, was a gift from God, through Jesus' wonderful healing.

And isn't that true for us too?

Our whole lives, and everything we have, is a gift from God.

For Sam and us the point is this:

if we don't **give**, we'll become greedy,

and if we don't **remember** all that God has done for us,

then we won't be **thankful** or able to trust him for our future.

But when we DO choose to do this, it sets us free!

free from the **selfishness** which puts our own needs and comfort first and hardens us to others' needs.

free from **fear**, because when we give *first*, we are trusting God to provide for our needs, not just giving him what's left over at the end.

Well, I hear you thinking, that's all very well in principle Anna, but what about in practice?

2 things for us all together, and then a few ideas to help s remember- I'll need your help for those!

1. As we celebrate Harvest we have a wonderful opportunity to say thank you to God through generous giving to others, in this case DASH- a very local charity working with our neighbours, single homeless people right where we are, showing love to them, as Jesus told us to.

2. an encouragement for us as a church.

The PCC recently took the decision in our giving for next year, to increase our

Parish Share to the Diocese by 5%. This money doesn't disappear into a black hole, it is used to fund Christian ministry- mainly clergy and their housing, right across Durham diocese and in many much poorer areas where local churches have few resources-

talk to me later if you'd like to hear more about this.

We are trusting God to give us what we need to meet our needs. We're choosing not to give away what's left over at the end of the year, but to commit these funds FIRST.

In our discussion we recognised that all we have is a gift from God and we also remembered how he has met our needs over the years and provided for us. I'm really thankful for our PCC members who are acting in faith and making wise choices.

And finally, for us as individuals a few things to help us remember- there are 5 elephants hidden around the church!

5 things:

- **Count your blessings!** At start of each day
- **Get up and Pray** Before we get busy, tired or forget
- **Keep Sunday special**, prioritising meeting with others for worship and prayer on the first day of the week
- **Grateful to God** good choices in how we use our money
- **Food Bank First-** remember longlife milk and fruit juice especially welcome- how about always picking these up **first** when we are shopping, not as an afterthought, *if* we remember? How about adding a carton to our trolley *every* week, not one in ten?

Sum up read 5 again- living thankful lives

Lets ask God to help us.

Hand out apples and pens , write one thing we want to offer to God or say thank you for in response to what we've heard.

PRAYERS- Tom and Bridget