

SERMON

Genesis 24:34-38,42-49,58-67

The Lord will Guide your Decisions

Nunawading and Waverley, 5-7-20

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Lord will guide your decisions. This is a wonderful promise we have from the Old Testament reading, which describes the steward's search for a **bride for Isaac**, Abraham's son. Last week I mentioned the Lord who sees all things for the benefit of his plan to bless the world through Abraham, which he fulfilled through his Son, Jesus. We serve this plan and make every sacrifice for it. However, we also need to add, that God does indeed see everything about us and as our heavenly Father, will guide us in the decisions we make.

How do you make decisions? Think about this for a moment. To what degree do you consult the Lord and bring him into your decision making? There are extremes to avoid. The first is that we are too reliant on signs. I know someone who told me about visiting a bookshop. There is one west of his house, the other east. Each Saturday morning, which one will he visit? He is a very serious Christian, reliant on his Lord through prayer. He flips a coin, explaining that this is how King David did it, who **drew a lot** when he had a decision to make. This is better than not praying at all, and if the choices are of equal value, quite ok; but there are problems. The coin is driven by the laws of probability that our Father generally doesn't like to interfere in. This applies to many things, for example, if you have a bad day on the stock exchange, it is not the Lord's doing because the market is driven by the valuation of companies and crowd psychology. God let's these forces have their way so that we live in a predictable universe. Of course, the stock exchange is God's blessing and we should acknowledge this and thank him when things go well and keep on trusting him when the market plunges. The Lord lead us through signs but we must be careful how we evaluate things that are also guided by God's natural laws.

Abraham's manager, a great believer in the Lord, used the sign-approach to a point. It may seem capricious that his sign was a young unmarried woman **willing to give water to his camels**. What if she were a total witch

and had simply offered water to a stranger out of the hope of getting money? Why not interview the local Aramean maidens and select the best one? However, the steward had it right. He was a good test of character and could work things out after fifteen minutes of conversation. Also, marriages were simpler back then because roles were very much predetermined and less could go wrong. He totally relied on the Lord, used his nous, and then backed it up with a confirming sign.

The main thing to grasp here is that the steward was making his decision based on faith. Abraham would not compromise the covenant God had established through him by letting his son Isaac marry an idol-worshipping Canaanite. Rather, he directed the steward to obtain one from his old clan in Aram, hopefully a relative who would be willing to adopt the true faith in the Lord. His choices were quite narrow and God's guidance would be easier to discern.

The Lord guided the manager. Life as a Christian is not simply letting God take care of our redemption while we make the earthly decisions and determine everything ourselves. That is a kind of practical atheism. Nor is everything determined by physical laws and reason, which is scientism, a false religion. People adopt this approach and get it wrong all the time because lurking below our common sense and our understanding of universe are arrogance, stubbornness, greed, lust for fame, and self-advancement. We are not always rational. If you want a new item, for example, you will apply every reason to justify buying it even if we cannot afford it. Therefore, we try to avoid the approach of relying on our reason alone. We are people of faith.

What should guide our decision making is the Lord who says he is **our Good shepherd**, who is deeply interested in the problems of his children he is leading towards redemption. Think of all those times our Lord Jesus answered someone crying out for a sick daughter or a blind person begging for help. Everything, especially the more significant things happening to us should be lifted up to our Lord Jesus and discussed with him. He will guide your decisions. Perhaps, rather than changing the world to suit us he will work on our thinking so that we come up with better decisions, God-pleasing decisions.

Let me close with encouraging you to believe that occasionally his voice, his inner voice, is loud and clear, even over personal, individual decisions. When we purchased a house recently, I prayed constantly about this. It is not like a trivial decision between wearing black pants or blue pants; it is a matter of prayer. All along I knew for a certainty that my Father had determined that Denise would find the house, even though I was searching as much as she was. It was something God revealed to me from experience.

There will always be decisions you thought the Spirit had arranged answers for but don't turn out. **We walk by faith and not by sight**, after all. A long perspective usually reveals where God's hand has been guiding us. We believe in his Fatherly goodness towards us and firmly believe that even when we make disastrous decisions, if we turn to him in trust, he will shape them towards a good end.