

As humans we have the capacity to choose. We have the freedom to live our lives in all kinds of ways. And that's both a good thing and bad.

Because being human is a complicated business. We're not always entirely aware of why we do the things we do. It seems as though we're free to choose how to act and react to the world around us and the people in it, but often we act without thinking, impulsively or unconsciously. Sometimes we have very little understanding of why we do things we do, especially the things we really wish we wouldn't do.

It can be confusing and frustrating.

Getting a handle on the way we live, conscious that every one of our actions has consequences, is really important. Because we are the world we live in, and our choices and actions can be a mighty force for good, and our choices and actions can do terrible, lasting harms.

Looking around, we can't miss all the human-caused and human-created suffering, both close to home in our own lives and out in the wider world.

All the really big, bad things, war, ecological and economic crises, violences of all kinds, they're all the result of our human freedom. Choices that've been made, words spoken, lives being lived, our human freedom to act one way over another.

All our choices and actions have consequences, all of them; none are trivial or inconsequential. Some heal, others do harm.

Our choices and actions create the future we will share. So there's a lot at stake in the way we live, how we live, how we use our freedom.

If we want to co-create a kinder and more gentle tomorrow, one with less stress and suffering than we're forced to survive today, we start right here (with ourselves).

In the second half of today's Gospel reading, Jesus tells the briefest of parables: A man has two sons, he asks them both to go and work in the vineyard, they're free to respond as they will. One of the sons says he'll go but then doesn't, the other says he won't, but then changes his mind and does.

Vineyard imagery and metaphors are found all over the place in Scripture. The vineyard usually represents God's people, and God is imagined as the vineyard owner. The fruit from the vines is the life God hopes for for and from God's people, and the ones sent to work in the vineyard, to tend it, to care for it, are the ones entrusted to do what they can to make sure the vine is healthy and the fruit is good.

Jesus is directing this parable to the religious leaders of the day, but there's something in there for us, too.

God has placed a call on each of our lives, God is calling us to work in the vineyard, calling us to respond with our choices and our actions, this is the work, and the life of the world is our reason for doing it.

We are free to respond as we will, *and* our response will have consequences far beyond ourselves.

Jesus is what saying "yes" to God's call looks like in its fullness.

Jesus would have us walk fearlessly in love, living humble lives of self-sacrifice and mutual care that are centered on the remarkable life-giving and liberating truth of God; but however much we might really want to do that too, wish we could that too, with all that we are, there are forces in this world and there's stuff in our own lives working against us and getting in the way.

Our woundedness can get in the way, as can our habits of thought and action, so can our fears, our angers, our resentments; it all makes it really hard to be faithful, to follow through on what we've said we'd do, what we've promised God our lives will be.

It's easy to say yes, yet too often, like that first son, we don't actually go, we don't actually do what we've been called to do and the world suffers as a result.

But saying "yes" to God doesn't come with an expectation that we be perfect, or faultless, only that we will act. That our lives, as best we can, our choices and actions, as best we can, will be our promised response to God's call. We'll do what we've said we'll do, because hypocrisy can and will do terrible harm.

Our "yes" to God is a commitment to do our very best to love God and love one another with every thought, choice, every word and action that we 'freely make.'

Our "yes" is a commitment to keep a close eye on our choices and our actions, what we think and what we say, so our lives reflect what we've said we'll do.

And when we don't do a terrific job, when we drift away from the work of our lives, our "yes" is our commitment to admit it, admit our failures, our sins against God and neighbor, and turn, again and again back to God, knowing that God's grace and mercy will always be our way forward.

This service of Holy Eucharist isn't just something we do on Sundays, it's actually a guiding framework for our whole lives, developed through the millennia, infused with ancient wisdoms, the Eucharist is a gift of the church, a way of living that can support our "yes" to the work we've been given by God to do.

The Eucharist is a curated collection of spiritual practices and disciplines to help us gain proficiencies, teach us how to do what we've said we're going to do, live as we've promised God we will live.

The Eucharist has the power to help us understand our freedom and learn how to use it rightly. It's all here, a way to stick with the task, the work, a way to learn to follow through on the promises we've made.

We do Eucharist together, because there's no such thing as a Christian separate from community.

We're intentional about being fully present to the vast and awesome truth of the loving and life-giving presence and action of God in all life and in all places; we sing our praises and we pray.

We're attentive to Scripture, and to the Gospel, we listen, we learn, and we are changed.

Together, we affirm our faith; and we pray for the needs of the church and of the world; and we examine our hearts and minds,

we acknowledge the impact of our lives on others and we confess our sins against God and our neighbor, and God bring us right back into relationship. And we share, together, in the deep peace of Christ.

We gather at the table and take into ourselves the holy food and drink for the life in Christ we've chosen.

And then we get back to it, restored and renewed, to do the work that God has given us to do, that we've said we'll do. Our life's purpose.

The world won't ever change because we say we're Christians, only if we live as followers of Jesus, actually do the work, and in this church the Eucharistic life is how we learn and develop the skills for the task set before us: how to tend and care for all God's people, and all of creation with our every thought, every word, every action. ... and, when we make a bit of a mess of it, how to persist, by never losing hope, but returning always to God in Christ and to one another, so we can get right back to it. Again, and again, and again.

So let our yes be a "yes" that's actually lived – our lives our response to God, our thought and speech, our choices and actions, intentional and deliberate, chosen for the care of God's people and for all of Creation.