Today’s readings call on us to choose well and the good news is that we have that choice every single day.

The prophet Ezekiel keeps it simple; you can turn towards the good or towards the bad. Turning towards one turns you away from the other. Most days, we probably do both. But, keep turning to the good and you make that path clearer and more familiar. Jesus reminds us that turning to the good is an action; it is not an identity, a societal role, nor a brand, but rather, it is the real footwork that we do. He reminds us that there are prophets and teachers, the prophets and teachers of our own time, to whom we can listen and change our minds until we become truly Christlike. The anti-racism work under way today is a loud and ever clearer call to us, as white people, to change our minds and our choices, even if we thought we already had, that there is still more to learn and deeper work to do. In fact, earlier this month, we all received a prayer intention as a form of obedience, of service in our community.

Another great word in these readings comes right in the middle of the message from St. Paul – attitude. Our attitude is another choice that we make each day and throughout the day, when we are paying attention. Unlike a personality, an attitude is ours to adopt, to choose. In this letter, we are encouraged to have the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus – humility. Maybe humility was not the first thing that came to mind when I mentioned attitude or Jesus, but as Benedictines, when we pause to reflect, we realize that it is essential
to who we are. As it happens, in our monastery’s continuous reading of the Rule of St. Benedict, we just started chapter 7 – Humility. Listen for it at evening prayer as the week goes on. This short passage from the letter to the Philippians contains two verses that are very familiar to us from the Rule, not only are they in there, but they are ideas we often focus on in our study of the Rule or in discussing Benedictine life – *Jesus humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* is the basis of the 3rd step of humility. Jesus was obedient to God in living a human life with all that that entailed; humbling himself, becoming part of creation, he gave us all the great gift of salvation. In the third step, Benedict emphasizes obedience to the abbot and elsewhere, extends this to the entire community – a concept which also appears in this Scripture passage, when Paul writes *Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.* Jesus did not look out for himself; he lived his life for us. This loving service to each other that Paul urges is Christ alive in our world. It is the way in the kingdom of God and appears throughout Paul’s letters. Benedict echoes it in Chapter 72 – the Good Zeal of Monks, right? When we live our lives that way, we are choosing humility, we are adopting an attitude of service; hopefully, we are cheerful givers.

In his book, *Life Lessons from the Monastery*, Abbot Jerome Kodell has a chapter he titles *Always, a Life for Others* and I want to share with you something he writes about prayer because as monastics, prayer is a key element of our charism. It is a choice we make every day and maybe some of us can choose to do more of it, to create more time for personal prayer. As Jerome Kodell writes:
The monastic instinct flows from a conviction in the heart of Christianity that through the indwelling presence of God, a person of faith is potentially in touch with the whole world; and that by making oneself available in the humble obedience of prayer, a channel is opened for God’s grace to flow to any or every need, whether known or not. Therefore, the authentic search for God anywhere, in a busy family life or in the silence of the cloister, is never selfish or individualistic. It is always seeking the good of the other. … We respond where we are called. Sometimes this is to a very busy and hands-on service of others and sometimes it is to a very secret search for God in silence. But always a true Christian vocation reaches out to others in love.

I know that there are many great pray-ers here in the chapel today so I am probably preaching to myself, to create more time in my day by turning away from some time wasting activity – and turning towards prayer for so many situations that cry out for loving attention, for healing, for reconciliation. There is plenty of prayer to do; our attitude of humility leads us to it and love tells us that it makes a difference.