Sermon:

**God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life** (3.16)

As late as 4th Century in some areas Christians were told not to go to synagogues to worship – which could only mean that some still did so! We normally think separation took place much earlier.

Choosing Jesus at first…

1. did not mean abandoning Judaism. Eg Nicodemus – Pharisee, came to him, **‘we know you are a teacher sent by God’** (3.2), tried to defend him (7.50-51), buried his body (19.39-40).

Every indication, but no proof, that he became a Christian.

1. included Jewish Christians still worshipping in Temple (Acts 2.46, 3.1, 5.12, 21, 21.26).
2. meant acknowledging him as Messiah (as did Peter in Matthew 16.16, Martha in John 11.27).
3. meant ‘being born again’. This meant changing image of God.

Many Old Testament pictures of God are quite ugly – butchering citizens/livestock of captured cities; this picture modified by people like Isaiah (eg 43.1-5) and Hosea (eg 11.8-9), but Jesus took it to another level, TEXT.

This led Christians very early on to worship Jesus, not as a man, a prophet, or an angel, but as God.

This passage is about choosing that Jesus. Some struggle to choose Jesus for two reasons:

* Church has a bad press (justified or not): why would a single mother on benefits, a lesbian, a gang member or an ex-prisoner dare to go into a church?
* Church has been tried and failed: folk damaged by inappropriate behaviours (deviant sexual, unloving)

Notice how choice of Jesus so easily becomes choice of Church?

TEXT. Choice of Jesus: It all depends upon the question!

* Are you looking for deep Truth? Jesus makes sense of past, present and future.
* Are you looking for deep Peace? Jesus puts us right with God, creation, others, self.
* Are you looking to deep connections? Jesus builds up community, support for self & others.

We see then that choice of Jesus affects the most important parts of life.

TEXT. Eternal Life is not just what happens after death, but before death too!

Can we see all this happening here, happening to you?