

Lesson: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. – NIV84

Prayer of the Day:

Lord God, in mercy receive the prayers of your people. Grant them the wisdom to know the things that please you and the grace and power always to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia. (John 6:68)

Sermon Text:

“That’s a no brainer!” The statement implies that the choice set before someone is something that should be obvious to all. Would you rather drink water or poison? Would you rather be happy or sad? Would you rather be loved or hated? The answers are all pretty simple, or at least they should be.

As we turn to the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is reviewing the history of Israel with that second generation which had grown up in the desert. He reminds them of the faithful and gracious guidance of their Savior-God and recounts the Covenant God had established at Sinai in Moral, Ceremonial and Civil Law. Having recounted God’s love for the people and His desire to keep them safe, Moses sets a bit of a no brainer before the people of Israel. Well, at least it should have been.

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It's an easy choice isn't it? Life or death, prosperity or destruction (literally good things or bad things) the choices seem so simple. The trouble of course has always come as we tried to seek it out. If you want life, then this is what you do, *I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.*

Jesus speaks of those commands in our Gospel lesson today, "*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. ... anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell (Matthew 5:20-21).*" ... "*You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).*" ... ³¹ "*It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'*" ³² "*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew 5:31-32).*" ... ³³ "*Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.'*" ³⁴ "*But I tell you, Do not swear at all (Matthew 5:33-34).*" I think we begin to get the drift.

The problem of course comes in when we hear the next lines of our lesson. ¹⁷ "*But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,*" ¹⁸ "*I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*" You see I think we spend a lot of time trying to explain away the righteous demands of a holy God. The Pharisees had made an elaborate system to do just that. It's why empty ritual was decried last week. It's why Jesus pokes holes in it during the Sermon on the Mount, this week. Israel struggles mightily to keep God's true law. That's why the second generation is listening to Moses and not the first. It was dead in the desert because of its sin. And while this generation will confess it's allegiance to God, the rest of the History of Israel is full of the good things and the bad things because they can't do it. They can't live up to the righteous demands of a holy God.

I think we are a lot like Israel. And When I say we I really mean me included. When we sin we like to make it less than it is. "Oh, God's not mad at me for that. He surely gives me a pass when I sin cause I'm one of his favorites, cause I really didn't mean it, because I sincerely thought I was doing the right thing, well the other kid deserved it for what they did, okay I'm the parent and right or wrong I needed to put them in their place. Jesus loves me it'll be okay."

Our God has no time for our pathetic excuses. Sin simply deserves evil things and there is no point in history where our God tells us it'll be okay just this once. Disobedience is death, destruction, evil things, an eternity in hell. Sin is simply always dangerous and our God would always have us stay away from it.

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So by now, I would expect a little anxiety to be growing in the heart and mind. I mean after all, I've sinned, we've sinned whether you count it little or small so that means no good

thing just bad things, no heaven, only hell and if that doesn't cause some anxiety then I don't know what would.

But did you hear those words we just read? They're of the utmost importance. If not for them we should run from these Words of God screaming in terror but with them we have hope and a future. After all this talk about us doing things, Moses says something very interesting and needed, *Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life.*

Did you catch it. "*The Lord is your life*". I've said it more times than I can count and I'll say it many more because it is so very true. The object of our Faith is important. If I believe the Twinkies taste good, I very well may believe a truth. If I believe snow is wet and winters are cold, I can probably even prove it scientifically. But none of those truths will ever save me no matter how much I choose them, no matter how firmly I believe them.

But when faith focuses on God, the true and only God of all creation I have something. Do you know why? Because the true God is life. Paul tells the Galatians, *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons* (Galatians 4:4-5). God does for you what you never could.

This is why Jesus came to us because God takes sin seriously. Jesus became flesh that He could keep the covenant for us that we might answer with confidence that in His holiness we have kept the commands of God. For every sin, whether in actual deed or thought and word, He goes to the cross to face the curse for us. Hell suffered as on the cross God turned His back on His son taking every Word of this covenant seriously FOR YOU. As a result you are no longer slave to the old covenant you are free from sin.

But to turn and run back into the clutches of wickedness that we might wallow in evil would be to treat this gift as if it were unimportant. Instead, as redeemed children of God we are now free to speak as Israel did for through faith in Christ we seek to live in His righteousness.

That means we strive to obey the commands of God. Paul said it this way in the Epistle Lesson, "*We have the mind of Christ* (1 Corinthians 2:16)." A mind which seeks His wisdom over that of the world understanding what our God has freely given us we live for Him (1 Corinthians 2:12).

As a result it all becomes a no brainer. Through faith in Christ, reveling in this unfathomable love, we begin to choose life, living for Christ, listening to God's Word, holding fast to Him over everything else and this not in fear that we will be cursed but confident in the life and good things Christ has already won for us.

So I hold Him out when opportunity presents itself. I cling to the cross even if it means a cross of my own in this world. I follow God and His will even when the world would entice and entrap me with worldly prestige and power or with its glittering gold. Make no mistake the world may call it foolish as Paul warns but we know that to *love the LORD our God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws;* means that we *will live and increase eternally, and the LORD our God will bless us in the land we are entering to possess,* our eternal home in heaven.

It's a no brainer or at least it should be and God has provided all of it. For through Christ and His work, through the gift of faith that He provides, **WE LIVE IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST! FOR CHRIST HAS NOT FREED US TO SIN, BUT HE HAS FREED US FROM SIN** to His glory and into glory everlasting. Amen!