

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen

Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 19, from our Old Testament reading, read to you just a few minutes ago, forms the basis for our meditation this morning.

- “Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live.

The context for these words is very important.

- The Children of Israel are about to enter the Promised Land.
- Moses has brought them to this point; but he will not be going with them.

And now, before his approaching death, and in handing over the task of leading the people to Joshua, he is giving his final address.

- He is exhorting the people to follow Yahweh. The One, True, God.
- Moses is giving to the people choices to make.....and the consequences of those choices made.

God has set before the Israelites clear alternatives.

- And besides for historical facts, why is that important to us?
- Because God is laying out those same alternatives and choices for you today.

In fact, the Children of Israel and you and I are in the same place.

- The Children of Israel are in the land of Moab, ready to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.
- You and I are in this broken world on our wilderness journey and we are preparing to cross over to our eternal home in a restored creation.

The God of Israel, the unchanging God of Israel, continues to exhort you, the new Israel, through the words of our Old Testament reading today.

- The God of Israel laid out for the Israelites, and you, choices to make.
- And what are those choices?
- Life and death.
- Good and evil.
- Blessings and curses.
- Everlasting happiness and life and death and eternal damnation.

The choices seem pretty easy and straightforward, don't they?

- In the words of casual conversation.....no brainers.
- Choose life. Why would you want to choose death?

Choose good.

- The Lord has freed you from bondage. He has given you a wonderful and new future.
- Why would you choose evil? The destruction and lies and deceit and chaos and brokenness of the devil?

Choose the abundant blessings that your Creator and Savior have in store for you.

- Don't choose the curse. Eternal separation from God's goodness under God's wrath.

Choose eternal life with your Creator.

- The eternal future.....bodily resurrection and eternal life in the new creation, the new heavens, and the new earth.
- Why would you want to choose eternal separation from your Creator?

All seems like no brainer decisions to me.

- We all have choices to make every day, don't we?
- Some big, some small.
- And sometimes we do okay. And sometimes not so good, don't we?

And today Moses is not talking about more trivial decisions.

- He is not talking about whether you should eat at McDonald's or Wendy's.
- He is talking about life changing, life determining decisions.
- Decisions to follow our Lord.

And we all know that, that doesn't always go so well all of the time, does it?

- It sure didn't for the Children of Israel.
- Moses exhorted ancient Israel to choose life.

But we know the rest of the story.

- They choose death.
- They persistently and consistently rebelled against Yahweh, their Creator and Savior.....

- And they went after the idles of the foreign nations around them.
- And the result in the end was chaos, destruction, and death.

God set them up with everything they needed.....

- But they chose the idles of man and turned away from God.
- And God turned from them.
- He punished them—just like He said He would.

And, unfortunately, many times we do the same—don't we?

- We, just like Israel are on the cusp of the Promised Land.
- We, like Israel, have been cared for and provided for in the wilderness journey we are on.
- And we have choices and decisions to make.

But we don't always do so good.

- Let me give you both some examples of this.

You go to the doctor.

- He tells you, you have to cut this out. Or, you have to do this to be healthy.
- A change in lifestyle.

You leave the doctor's office with some conviction that you're going to do it.

- You got the message.
- You understand.

But back out in the world, back out in the daily routine, you fall back into old habits.

- Temptations and comfort speak to loudly to you.
- Just this once I'll do it. It won't hurt.
- And once turns into twice which turns into all the time.
- And now your back in the doctor's office suffering the consequences of your decisions made.

Or, how about being in church.

- Think about this.
- The Maker of heaven and earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Savior of the world makes an appointment to meet up with you each week.

- He does it because He desires to give you His gifts of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

He does this to give you the means and nourishment by which your faith is preserved and caused to grow.

- In His house, it is the place where God protects you so that you are not overcome by the world.
- In His house, it is the place where He supremely expresses His love for you.
- In His house, it is the place where His love causes you to love Him.

Yet I don't think any of you had trouble finding a place to sit today.

- There are probably times for each of us that church seems mundane. Oh.....why go today?
- I know there are some who cannot be here and watch live stream. Thank you for your worship with God as best you are able,,,,,,but that is not the majority of those not here.

Other things, other temptations get in the way.

- Just like for Israel, there are a lot of false idols around us.

They become our god above the one true God.

- Sports events, sleeping in, house projects and other things all take over.
- Even for many, allured by worldly thinking, and letting go of God and choosing and trusting in the thinking of man because it seems more tangible and easier to fall in line with the masses.

And then, when the choices are made, the choices at one point that looked so good, there is a day of reckoning.

- Maybe it is the struggles, the conflict of the world that you now are not sure how you will make it.
- Maybe it is lying in the hospital bed lamenting to the Pastor that I should have done better.
- Maybe it is the family member sitting in the Pastor's office shedding tears lamenting how they don't understand how things all fell apart.

(PAUSE)

One more example.

- We all know that God gives us peace, comfort, strength, joy in His Word.

- Think for a moment in these terms. The Maker of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Savior of the world speaks to you.
- He gives you His Word. He gives you counsel, comfort, peace and strength for whatever it is you face.

But where is the Word of God on the list of things you turn to for help?

- How much time do you spend in God's Word?
- Do you have daily devotions?
- Are you involved in Bible study?
- God offers to you this day the blessings of His Word.

Well, to be honest, the children of Israel did not do so well with the exhortations from Moses.

- And how will we go forth from here?
- We know how God promises and does care for us.
- But sometimes we have not heeded the exhortations He gives to us today.

And why is that?

- The fact that ancient Israel would repeatedly rebel against the Creator and Savior, and we do also, is telling about the human condition.
- It reveals that we are all alike on our own.
- We are sinful and unclean and deserve temporal and eternal punishment.
- We are all rebellious, opposed to the true God and bent towards idolatry.

Yet the Creator wants to love His human creatures and wants His human creatures to love Him.

- He wants His human creatures to enjoy the abundant life by loving their Creator and keeping His commandments.

It was that way for Israel and it is that way for us today.

- His rules and commands are not arbitrary or just hurdles to get over.
- No, it is what is best for us.
- God still wants an obedient people.

Therefore, in the fullness of time He sent His only begotten Son into the flesh to join the human race.

- To become the true Israel. Jesus is Israel reduced to one.
- By His active life Jesus became the obedient Israel.

- Jesus loves the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, and mind.
- Jesus loves you as God loved Him.

He constantly harkens to God's voice.

- He held fast to God.
- He walked in His Father's ways and kept His commandments.

God has a faithful and obedient people.

- And it is Jesus.

But the narrative does not stop there.

- Jesus took upon Himself the curse that was directed against the rest of us.
- As written in Deuteronomy chapter 27—Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of the Law by doing them.
- Jesus became the cursed in the place of ancient Israel and in the place of the whole world.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us.

- And then God raised Jesus from the dead.
- And through Jesus God's blessings now come to sinners like you and me.
- Through Jesus, God forgives all your sins and gives you an abundant life.

You are now in fellowship with your Creator and Savior.

- Remember last week we had a Baptism?
- Through Baptism into Christ, He has made you part of His new Israel.
- Through faith, that He has given you, you already now have eternal life with your God.
- Today, God invites you to choose life by loving the Lord your God and by walking in His ways.
- His will is good for you.
- His ways are just and right.
- And He has this wonderful future prepared for you.

But, to choose God's good alternatives we need God's help.

- That help is clearly spelled out for us in verse 20 of our Old Testament reading for today. "He is they life."
- And we dare not choose otherwise and abandon Him.

Do you remember our theme for last week? How we are all dependent little children.

- Look at the cover of your bulletin for today.
- It is the picture of a little child hugging and holding on to Jesus.
- That needs to be you and me.
- And the words on the bulletin cover, “Holding fast to Him for He is your life and length of days.”

Eternal life in the new heavens, the new earth, the new and greater Promised Land.

- That is what we have to look forward to.
- That is what is ahead for us.

Today you stand at the entry into the Promised Land.

- Today life and death stand before you.
- Today the God of Moses, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ invites you to choose life.
- Say no to the idolatries of this world and say yes to your Creator and Savior.
- Say yes to your Lord Jesus Christ.
- Choose life and get ready to inherit the new and better Promised Land.
- Amen.

(Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess together the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.