

The Sixth Sunday After the Epiphany
February 20, 2011
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 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. 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, 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. 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 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. (NIV)

Are you a fan of game shows? Many of the popular ones have drama because of the choices people have to make on them. *Let's Make a Deal*, *Deal or No Deal*, or even *The Price is Right*, give people some big choices that result in what they are going to take home with them. "Do you want what is in this envelope or what is behind curtain number 2? Do you want to take this offer from the banker or take your chances on opening a couple more cases? Do you want this showcase or another one?" Some of the choices people make do not turn out very well. That would stink to end up with a gazebo when you could have had a brand new car, or to turn down hundreds of thousands of dollars to only walk away with a couple dollars.

But the truth is these kind of choices are not just for game shows. We make choices all the time that impact our lives in big ways. What school will we attend, whom will we marry, how do we eat and take care of our bodies, what job or career path will we take, where will we live? All our lives we are faced with choices, big ones, small ones, daily ones.

Today, dear friends, Moses lays before God's people the most important and biggest of all choices. Do you want to follow the true God who rescued you from slavery and is about to give into your hands a land flowing with milk and honey, or do you want to turn to other gods, worthless idols? Do you want to obey the Lord your God and keep His commands, or do you want to disobey, rebel and stand in opposition to the Lord Almighty? Do you want life and blessings, or death and curses? And Moses does not hide anything. There is no guessing what is behind curtain one or two. As Moses places before God's people two very different paths, I pray that our eyes are opened to see there isn't much of a choice to make at all. It is easy to know what we want because: **Life with God is Good!**

Deuteronomy is really the swan song for Moses. Moses will no longer be leading the Israelites because soon he would die and be buried and Joshua would lead God's

children into the promised land. If you had some final words for your children, one last letter to leave them, what would you say to them, what advice would you give, what would your parting words sound like? We would do well to say similar words to what Moses does in Deuteronomy. He reminds them of all the promises and blessings and commands of the Lord God. He encourages them to remain faithful. He basically pleads with them to make sure that God is in their life. God is their life! He is their all. *“Don’t ever forget it. Don’t ever forget Him - the Lord who made you His own people, and rescued you from your misery and slavery, and made to you some remarkable promises.”*

Here in chapter 30 Moses writes, *“See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 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.”* Literally, the Hebrew reads that before them is life and good, or death and evil. Life with God is good. They will have a satisfying earthly life under God’s daily providence. They will have a rich spiritual life in daily fellowship with God enjoying His gracious favor as His forgiven children. They have the promise of eternal life through the merits of the Messiah, a life of endless joy in the heavenly presence of God. How could they not want to love the Lord, walk in His ways, and keep His commands. Life with God is good.

As good as life is with God, the opposite is just as true. It is full of only death and evil without God. *“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, 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.”* Without God they would truly be on their own. No one to help them, no one to guide them, no one to step in when their enemies come to devour them. When they turn their hearts to idols and away from the true God they will be cut off from all the Lord’s gracious blessings. All that will be left for them is death - spiritual death, earthly death, eternal death.

You can see why Moses states the seriousness of this all as he calls on God’s creation to be his witness saying: *“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.”* Again Moses wants them to remember the Lord who gave them all they had. He wants them to remember how God came to them again and again in His grace. *“Remember God chose you out of all the nations of the earth and made you His treasured possession. He gave you His laws, certain laws only for you to govern your worship and life and to bless you. He gave you and you alone a luscious land. He has promised a Savior will come from one your own descendants. The Lord God has given you a good life.”* In fact, as Moses tells them *“the LORD is your life.”*

The choice for Israel should be a easy one to make, shouldn’t it? I don’t even think any game show contestants could mess this one up, could they? Yet, we know the history of Israel and it is not a pretty one. Many turned to idols. They ignored the Lord’s commands. They did not *“love the LORD, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.”* And many forgot the Lord their God. Their hearts were turned to other things. They chose the path of evil, destruction, and death. Dear friends, as Paul writes to the Corinthians: *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as*

warnings for us...So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (10)

We too know by experience that life with God is good. We haven't been given the same covenants as the Israelites once received on Mount Sinai, but the Lord has established a covenant of grace with us. The Lord carried out the most important promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through which all nations will be blessed. He sent us His Son. Jesus kept the law for us. Jesus became the atoning sacrifice on the cross not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. Jesus rescued us from our misery and slavery. Jesus came out of the grave smashing all our enemies and giving us life. We enjoy a good life in Christ - peace with God, daily provisions, a rich spiritual life with God as our Father, the sure promises of eternal life. God has taken us, natural born enemies, and by His grace through water and the Word, through the good news of the gospel, He has made us His chosen people. Life with God is good.

So why would we ever chose anything else? Perhaps, like the Israelites, we might start to feel like we can do things by our own strength and power. Perhaps, like the Israelites, we might begin to get wrapped up in the world around us and become like the people of this world. Perhaps, the Lord God gets ignored bit by bit, more and more, in our lives. If God and our life with God is not our top priority something needs to change and change quickly. Moses would plead earnestly with us ***'now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.'*** He would remind us ***"the LORD is your life."***

What kind of life do we want? There is only one life that is good - a life with God. I couldn't do anything without the Lord my God. I couldn't have anything from Him without my Savior who bled on died to pay for my sins at Calvary? I couldn't accomplish anything good if God by His grace did not make me His own. Thankfully, the Lord God has done all this for me and continues to be my God even when I don't deserve it. He continues to love me by His grace. He continues to speak to me through His Word and let me speak to Him in prayer. He continues to protect me from my enemies and watch over my life. He continues to guide me and teach me His ways that I may walk in His truth. Life with God is good! Martin Luther once declared: ***"Whoever knows that God is gracious to him walks through life along a path of roses, even in tribulation, and for him the land flows with milk and honey."***

I pray each of us take to heart Moses' final plea for God's children. ***"Do not forget the Lord your God. Remember the Lord for He is your life. He is your salvation. He is your all. There is set before you today only two paths - one with the true God and the other without Him."*** This is much bigger, my friends, than what may be behind door number one or door number two. For all people will go only one of two ways: ***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3).*** Thank God for the good life He has given you in Christ Jesus. Life is good, always good with our God! May God grant us the grace to love Him with all our hearts, listen to His Word, and hold fast to Him not just today but forever. Amen.

