

Sixth Sunday After The Epiphany

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

February 16, 2014

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

As We Go Through Life We Have Many Choices To Make. Some Choices Are Insignificant....While Others Are Life Changing. We Make Choices About What We Are Going To Eat And What We Are Going To Wear. We Make Choices About What To Do After High School. We Make Choices About Marriage And Financial Investments. We Make Choices About Sex Before Marriage, Drinking And Driving. We Make Choices About Being Faithful To Our Husband Or Wife....Choices, Choices, And More Choices. Our Old Testament Lesson For This Morning Reminds Us Of The Most Important Choice We Will Ever Make In Our Whole Life.....The Ultimate Choice....The Choice Between Life And Death. It's A Choice About Life And Death Because It's The Choice About The Only Person Who Has Control Over Life And Death: God. If There Is No God, Well Then There Is No Choice....The Only Option Is Death....That's It. So **"Eat Drink And Be Merry...For Tomorrow You Die"** But If There Is A God...And There Is...Then The Choice Is Between Death....And Life.....And Because God Is Love.....He Wants Us To **"Choose Life"**. I. Now When You Think About ItDoesn't It Seems Odd That That Given A Choice Between Life And Death.....God Has To Encourage Human Beings To Chose Life? It's Like Well, **"Duh"**. This Is More Than A Hint That Something Is Profoundly Wrong With People. And It's Called Original Sin...Living For Self.....Instead Of Living For God.....But.....And Here Is Where It Gets Serious....God Is The Only Source Of Life.

A. When People Think About Life And Death.....They Are Only Thinking About Physical Life And Death. But When God Says To Choose Life.....He Is Talking About Spiritual Life. And What Is Spiritual Life? Having A Relationship With God. If You Have Spiritual Life, Life With God, Your Body Will Live Forever.....You Have Eternal Life. But If You Don't Have Spiritual Life, Life With God.....Then Physical Death Ends In Eternal Death In Hell Where You Are Forever Separated From God. And Jesus Christ Is The Key To Our Relationship With God. In Jesus Christ God Has Shown Us The Depth Of His Love For Us By Forsaking His Own Sinless Son On The Cross. And So God Has Every Right To Expect All People To Love Him As He Says: **"Loving The Lord Your God,."** To Not Love God Is The Highest Form Of Ingratitude. But Love Is More Than Words.....Love Is Shown In Action. This Is True Of All Relationships, Including Husbands And Wives...And Parents And Children. We Show People Love By What We Do. And So It Is With God.....We Show Our Love For God Not Only By What We Say But Also By What We Do As We Read In Our Text: **"By Walking In His Ways And By Keeping His Commandments."**

Although We Are Not Saved From Death By How We Live... We Can Never Be Good Enough... Yet How We Live Does Show That We Have Been Saved From Death And That We Have Life In Jesus. To Have Life With God Means To Live A Life That Is Pleasing Not To Ourselves.....That's A False God.....Not A Life That Is Pleasing To Other People Or To The World.....That Too Is A False God.....But To Have Life With God Shows Itself In Living A Life That Is Pleasing To Him....

B. So Then.....To Have A Relationship With God Means To Have Life....And Not To Have A Relationship With Him Means Death. And This Is Why God Warned The People Of Israel Not To Reject Him For Any Other Gods.....Because There Would Be Consequences: **"...If Your Heart Turns Away...To Worship Other Gods And Serve Them...You Shall Surely Perish. You Shall Not Live Long In The Land That You Are Going Over The Jordan To Enter And Posses"** . But, Most Of Them Didn't Listen. Most Of Them Chose Death By Choosing Other Gods. And The Consequences Were Disastrous As God Removed Them From The Promised Land Using The Babylonian Empire To Destroy Them. People Often Underestimate God. Sometimes People Get A Little Cocky Towards God Because When The Consequences Of Their Sin Is Not Obvious And Immediate... Well... They Erroneously Conclude That Either There Is No God Or That God Doesn't Care About Their Sinful Behavior! That's A Serious Miscalculation As Paul Says So Well In His Letter To The Galatians: **"Do Not Be Deceived: God Is Not Mocked, For Whatever One Sows, That Will He Also Reap. For The One Who Sows To His Own Flesh Will From The Flesh Reap Corruption, But The One Who Sows To The Spirit Will From The Spirit Reap Eternal Life" (6: 7, 8 Esv).** So Then We Are To Take Good Care Of Our Faith In Jesus Because.....He Is Our Life As We Read In Our Text: **"Holding Fast To Him For He Is Your Life."**.....To Reject Him Or To Drift Away From Him Is To Chose Death. Our Life In Jesus Is Maintained By Confessing Our Sin To God And Constantly Receiving His Forgiveness Through His Word And Sacraments, The Means Of Grace. Only Jesus Stands Between Us And Hell. To Chose Life Is To Choose Jesus.

ii. God Sets Before All Of Humanity, Before You And Me, The Choice Of Life Or Death.

A. And He Tell Us To **"Choose Life"** Because He Loves Us. He Is Compassionate And Merciful. Like A Loving Parent ...He Always Wants What Is Best For Us....What Is Good For Us.....Listen Again To What He Told The People Of Israel: **"..Then You Shall Live And Multiply, And The Lord Your God Will Bless You In The Land...Therefore Choose Life, That You And Your Offspring May Live...That You May Dwell In The Land That The Lord Swore To Your Fathers..." (Vv. 16, 19, 20).** You See? God Wanted His People To Stay In The Land That He Gave Them...He Wanted To Them To Prosper.....He Did Not Want Them To Suffer.....Again He Is Like Loving Parents Who Want Their Children To Make Good Choices So That They Will Have Fewer Problems In Life And Be Happy! And So Because God Loves You..And Me.....He Wants Us To Make Good Choices To Save Us Not Only From

Problems In His World ...But So Save Us Especially From Eternal Death In Hell... In Our Gospel Lesson (**Matthew 5: 21-37**) Our Lord Jesus Talks About Bad Choices That Lead To Damnation In Hell....Which He Mentions Not Once But Three Times. Such Warnings Are Not Done Out Of Meanness But Out Of Love.....Because God Doesn't Want Anyone To Go To Hell...As Paul Says In His First Letter To Timothy: **"God...Desires All People To Be Saved And To Come To The Knowledge Of The Truth" (2: 3, Esv).**

B. And God Himself Gives Us The Ability To Choose Life Because He Has Already Chosen Us! This Was True Of The People Of Israel! When God Told Them To **"Choose Life"** He Had Already Chosen Them To Be His People As He Says Earlier In This Book Of Deuteronomy: **"It Was Not Because You Were More In Number Than Any Other People That The Lord Set His Love On You And Chose You, For You Were The Fewest Of All Peoples" (7: 7, Esv).** So Then To **"Choose Life"** Simply Meant Not To Reject Their Loving God Who Had First Chosen Them! God Had Made Them His People And Had Given Them So Many Good Things And So Many Wonderful Promises....Including That The Savior Of The World Would Come From Them. The Savior Of The World Would Be A Jew! And There Was Always A Minority Of Jews Who Did Chose Life...Those In Israel Who Were Waiting And Waiting For The Coming Savior.... And Like Them We Too Can Chose Life In Jesus Christ Because, Just Like With The People Of Israel, God Has Chosen Us As Paul Says In 2nd Thessalonians: **"God Chose You As The Firstfruits To Be Saved, Through Sanctification By The Spirit And Belief In The Truth" (2: 13, Esv).** By Giving You The Gift Of Faith In Jesus Christ.... God Chose You To Be Saved From Death And Damnation In Hell.....He Chose You To Be His Child And To Have Eternal Life In The Resurrection From The Dead To A New World.....And By Being Here This Morning You Are Choosing Him. You Chose To Come Here Instead Of Sleeping In. You Chose To Come Here Instead Of Watching Television Or Being On Your Computer. You Chose To Come Here Instead Of Doing Something Else. And You Have Chosen To Live For Him As You Said In Your Confession This Morning: **"Forgive Us, Renew Us, And Lead Us, So That....We May Delight In Your Will And Walk In Your Ways To The Glory Of Your Holy Name."** You Have Chosen These Things Because You Know That He First Chose You.....Not Because Of Who You Are Or What You Have Done....But Because Of His Grace, Love And Mercy....And This Is Why You Want To Live Your Life For Him....

Conclusion: You See Then God Really Is Like A Loving Parent. Indeed, He Loves You Even More Than Your Parents. Children Do Not Give Themselves Life.....They Do Not Choose To Be Born. Their Parents Give Them Life.....And That's Why They Want The Best For Their Children. Loving Them, Teaching Them, Guiding Them, Influencing Them So That They Make Good Choices In Life And Save Them From The Bad Consequences That Come From Bad Choices. And So It Is With God....In Jesus Christ God Your Heavenly Father Has Chosen You To Be His Child. He Has Given You Life.....Physical, Spiritual And

Eternal Life...Life With God.....YesHe Has Chosen You So That You Might Also Chose Him And Live For Him ... And When The Day Finally Comes That You Stand Before Jesus Christ Who Will Judge The Living And The Dead.....Your Joy Will Be Complete In KnowingYou Made The Right Choice.....The Choice Of Life Over DeathAmen..