

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Choose Life With The LORD

- 1) He is the source of this life.
- 2) He brings the blessings of this life.

Epiphany 6A

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St. John Lutheran Church - Frankenmuth, Michigan

15See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16For 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.

17But 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, 18I 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. 19This 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 20and 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.

Introduction: A high school football team had a season all wanted to forget. The team never won a game. Every game was a blow out except that last one. The team could have pulled off a win but.... During the game's fourth quarter and a touch-down

away from winning both the 1st and 2nd string quarter backs left the game with injuries on the 1st n 2nd downs. With 30 seconds on the game clock, the coach decided to have his son, the punter, fill the spot. He coached his newly quarterback son this “swan song” series of two plays: “Hand off to the full back for the next play. Let him get a few yards. Then I want you to punt the ball.” What was his goal? Not a touchdown. He hoped to avoid the opponents getting back the ball and scoring.

For the third down, the son handed off the ball. Surprisingly, the back made it to the opponent’s two yard line before tackled—a fresh first down with 10 seconds to play! For the next play and no timeout left to regroup...guess what? The center hiked the ball and the quarterback son punted. Losing the game his furious father grabbed his quarterback son shouting, “What in the world were you thinking?” The punter son said, “What a dumb play the coach called!”

Coach Moses led this second string generation of Israelites to the Jordan River, the goal line to the Promised Land. Before crossing, Coach Moses didn’t urge them to “punt” their Christian faith. Although he wouldn’t personally lead them into Canaan, he assured the LORD would through Joshua. But Moses’ divinely righteous “swan song” instructed them to always apply this godly correct coaching of their LORD God—as always true for us:

Choose Life With The LORD

1. He is the source of this life. 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... walk in his*

ways, and to keep his command, decrees...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 hearts 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” (vv.15-18). The Israelites had a choice: win with the LORD or lose with the lost!

A. Why did the Israelites...and all people need life with the LORD?

1. Israel had a history checkered with loosing: the LORD’s powerfully delivered them from Egyptian slavery yet the people repeatedly rebelled (Golden Calf incident in **Exodus 32** serves as an example). Israel’s first string generation’s sins consequence prevented their entrance into Canaan. Even Coach Moses failed to give the LORD glory for bringing water out of the rock at Kadesh—that sinful waters of Meribah (“*quarreling*”) lost his entrance into this earthly promised land (**Nu. 20:10-12**).

2. Why do people have a predisposition to “loose” or sin? Sin stems from Adam’s fall; his sin temporally injured the human race. St. Paul reports: “...*sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all...because all sinned...*” (**Romans 5:12**).

B. What did the LORD do to change this loss and win life?

1. He had a plan, humanely dumb but divinely wise. St. Paul in today’s epistle says: “*We...speak a message of wisdom... not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s*

secret wisdom, a wisdom...that God destined for our glory before time began” (1 Corinthians 2:6-8).

2. The LORD’s divine plan involved using His Son. He alone could complete it and win for us. And He did! Jesus always did right—no dumb plays; kept His Father’s will perfectly as our Substitute. It seemed as if opponent Satan won when Jesus died on the cross. Yet, St. Paul reports the features and benefit outcome of Champ Jesus: “*For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*” (Romans 5:15). Jesus won our salvation for “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Appropriation: Dearly beloved: Moses spoke to people of faith, like us, who believe in this LORD God of “*free and faithful grace*”; we’re on Jesus’ team. Admittedly, there are times when we feel like following Jesus is a 4th and 40 to the goal line. We want to punt. Or, so many choices challenge us to chase other “gods” instead of moving forward in the faith. We had to choose whether to sleep in this morning or come to church; we had to decide: another cup of morning coffee or coming to church an hour early for Bible class and a cup of coffee here; we had to choose in which church pew to sit—ok, that might be easy since some sit in the same pew every Sunday! Do we choose reading the Frankenmuth News vs. reading the Good News of God’s word? Dear fellow redeemed, Moses coaches: keep choosing life with the LORD Jesus! Jesus didn’t

punt. He is the only one Who rescued us from sin and its consequences which He won by His perfect life, innocent death and victory resurrection.

Transition: In fact, parallel to Moses' "swan song," the Hebrew writer coaches: "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets [like Moses] at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son.... We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away*" (1:1-2; 2:1).

2. He coaches with the staying power for this life.

A. The LORD has made us "*wise for salvation.*"

1. Coach Paul prompts us: "*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of...how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15)

2. What a testimony to baptism's life assurance and power whereby the Holy Spirit planted faith in our hearts that confess, "*Jesus is LORD*" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

B. Moses impressed upon the Israelites to continue in this life with LORD.

1. Moses called for this vow: "*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....*" (vv. 19-20)

2. Joshua, Moses' earthly successor, led the people into the earthly Promised Land urging with his "swan song": "*Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River...serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose...this day whom you will serve...as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:14-15).

Appropriation: Dear chosen by the LORD followers: Another father had a disobedient young son. He wanted to impress on his son the seriousness of disobedience. So, he put up a post in the yard. Each time the boy did something wrong, his father had him drive a nail into the post. Each time the boy obeyed, the father allowed him to remove a nail. As the boy grew older and seemingly more obedient, he removed more and more nails until all gone. In his pride, he showed his father the nail-free poll. But his father lovingly pointed out all the holes. Although the son believed his good had offset all his bad, the nail holes (scares) remained—Jesus' point in the today's gospel lesson to any self-righteous person thinking he can make himself right with God. The son hung his head in shame for his self-righteous boasting. That night after the son went to bed, the father filled in every nail hole with wood putty. He coated the post with redwood stain. After breakfast, he showed his son the post. "There is one lesson I want you to take to heart. Let this newly refinished post always remind that our heavenly Father took out His fury for our sins on His Son and the LORD gives you life in Jesus."

Conclusion: Dear fellow redeemed, our lives can be full of the holes of bad choices, scared with the pain of guilt and shame. But God sent His perfect Son to remove our nails of sin, having them driven through His hands and feet, covering His cross—not with redwood stain—but “*the blood of Jesus...which purifies us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). Jesus’ resurrected, glorified body still has those scars to remind us of the victorious life He has won for us. But they assure us even in death of the eternal PROMISED LAND of heaven, where the LORD took Moses (Matthew 17:3-4) and remind us: “*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the LORD Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body*” (Philippians 3:20-21)—like His...only without scars! Moses says, “*Choose That Life With The LORD!*” Amen.