

## Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Epiphany 6; February 16 & 17, 2020

A farmer hired a man to work for him. He told the man that his first task would be to paint the barn and said it should take him about three days to complete. But the hired man was finished in one day. The farmer sent him to cutting wood, telling him it would require about 4 days. The hired man finished in a day and a half, to the farmer's amazement. The next task was to sort out a large pile of potatoes. He was to arrange them into three piles: *1. seed potatoes, 2. food for the pigs, 3. and potatoes that were good enough to sell.* The farmer said it was a small job and shouldn't take long at all. With how quickly he had completed the other jobs, the farmer thought that this should have been easily done in less than a day. At the end of the day, the farmer came back and found the hired man had barely started. *"What's the matter here?"* the farmer asked. *"I can work hard, but I can't make decisions!"* replied the hired man.

Just like that hired hand, we daily face decisions and choices. Some of those choices are fairly easy. We choose what to wear. Perhaps, we choose what car to drive. We choose what to eat. There are many choices and decisions that we are making every day. Some of those choices are easy to make. Then there are the other choices – the choices that are almost impossible to make. This morning, Moses is asking the children of Israel to make a choice. **"See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction."** What kind of choice is that? Why would anyone choose **death and destruction** over **life and prosperity**? Yet, that choice is much harder than it looks. In fact, they would fail in choosing **"life and prosperity."**

Moses had seen it happen too many times. Moses knew that his life was about to come to an end. The book of Deuteronomy records his final *"sermon"* to the children of Israel just before they entered the Promised Land. He would not lead them in. He had one more chance to remind them of God's grace. He had one more chance to tell them about the serious consequences that would happen, if they would choose to not follow God. For 40 years, he had seen them slip back into sin. For 40 years, he had seen them choose **death and destruction**. For 40 years, he had seen them fail. It was going to happen again and again. As much as Moses wanted God's people to choose **"life and prosperity,"** he knew that they would fail. In the very next chapter, Moses predicts: **"For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall on you because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord and arouse his anger by what your hands have made."** (Deuteronomy 31:29)

The choice should have been an easy choice to make. A few weeks ago, we happened to watch the *Tournament of Champions* on the game show, *Jeopardy*. (By the way, we are not regular viewers of *Jeopardy*.) But this series looked intriguing. I don't know how someone can possibly cram all of those facts and choices on those episodes into their brains. I think that I might have gotten a couple of the choices correct, but not a whole lot. I clearly would not have won anything. When you look at the choices that Moses is putting before the people here, the choice was easy. I don't think that any game show contestant could have messed up the choice that Moses is giving. Yet, we know what happens. They ignored God's commands. They would fail. If Moses were standing in front of us today, he would probably say the same thing to all of us. *You will fail!*

We can see how easy it is to see us fail in making these choices in life in our Gospel lesson for today. Jesus speaks about a couple of ways that we break God's commands. **"Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."** (1 John 3:15) How often do we let hatred smolder in our hearts about a brother or sister in Christ? Jesus warns us about the words of cursing and swearing that come out of our mouths. How many of those examples of Jesus do we fail at? According to Jesus, we are murderers. We are adulterers. We are liars. We can give any excuse that we want, but the bottom line is that way too often we choose **"death and destruction"** over **"life and prosperity."** Left by ourselves, we can only fail. We know what we should do, we just can't do it. No one can!

That's why we need God. Moses reminded the children of Israel, and us, that **"the Lord is your life."** Even when they failed, God had a plan to fix their hearts. God knew that there would be times that his people would fail. Yet, God had chosen them to be his people. As he said in the first part of the book of Deuteronomy: **"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession."** (Deuteronomy 7:6) He treasured them way too much to just let them go. Even though they would fail, God would not fail them. He will not fail us. He treasures you that much as well.

Since he treasures people so much, God fixes hearts. God wants our hearts. He wants us to treasure us like nothing else in this world. Last Friday was Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day has become one of those days that we get to express how much love we love certain people in our lives. According to one article that I read, *Americans were expected to spend an average of \$142 on a Valentine's Day present for their significant other this year. Yet, it turns out; the way to your partner's heart isn't to overspend. On average, the most people think their partner should put toward a Valentine's Day gift is \$201. If they were to exceed that amount, 31% say they'd actually be "turned off."* (<https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/13/how-much-americans-plan-to-spend-on-valentines-day.html>)

I really am not going to judge you for spending or not spending money on Valentine's Day. But I'm glad that God spent a whole lot more than \$201 to make my heart to treasure him. He gave his Son to fix our hearts. When Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, their sin cut them off from God. Yet, God did not stop loving them. He promised that a Savior was going to come to crush the head of the serpent. It would be only through that Savior that they could once again be at peace with God. Sin could only be paid for by the blood of the Son of God. On the cross, we see Jesus choose to be punished for the sins of the world. On the cross, we see God restoring our relationship with him. God knew that we could never choose to follow him, so he chose us. He chose to fix our sin-filled hearts through his Son, Jesus.

God gave his Son to save us. Jesus gave his life to save us. God wants us to pass that message of Jesus from one generation to another. One final note to Moses' encouragement this morning in our text: **"Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."** Moses reminds us that this heart-fixing is not just for us, but it is also for our children, our grandchildren and future generations. The choices we make to serve either ourselves or our God affects our families. So, we get to show in our lives what it means for a believer in Jesus to make choices that are God-pleasing and Christ-centered. When we may fail, and we will fail, we go to the God who has never failed us. We remember that we are his children, whom he loves with all his heart.

A Columbia researcher once calculated that the average person makes about 70 decisions every day. That's 25,500 decisions a year. Over 70 years, that's 1,788,500 decisions. Yet, in all those decisions and choices, there is only one choice that matters. God has chosen you. He has fixed your heart so that you can let others see that the **"Lord is your life."** May God grant us the grace to love Him with all our hearts Amen.