



Sermon: Sunday, January 28, 2024

“The Offer of Life or Death”

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 30:11-20 ¹¹ “Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ ¹⁴ No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. ¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you do not hear but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall certainly perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him, for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

Introduction: Moses' Last Will

Today is the fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Today's text is Deuteronomy, which is Moses' last sermon to the Israelites on the plains of Moab. Deuteronomy is a repeated confirmation of Israel's history and a review of the covenant and law that the Lord gave to the Israelites. Deuteronomy is more than a simple repetition of the covenant and law; however, it calls for a personal decision about the lives of the Israelites.

Moses was a hero of the Israelites for being called by God to lead the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. He dies in the land of Moab, almost at the end of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness, just before they enter the promised land of Canaan. Moses left behind a will and taught how the Israelites should live when they entered Canaan. Today's text is some of the key content among Moses' teachings.

Verse 16 of today's text explains to the Israelites their fate if they follow God's commands when they enter Canaan. That is, if the Israelites love God and keep his commands, regulations, and laws, the Israelites will survive and prosper for a long time and occupy the land of Canaan. On the other hand, verses 17-18 are the opposite of verse 16. In other words, if the Israelites abandon God and serve other gods, the Israelites will perish and will not be able to live long in the land of Canaan.

Simply put, if the Israelites obey God, they will be blessed and prosper, and if they disobey God, they will suffer disaster.

In fact, these words of the Bible are something we hear often and take for granted. That is why these teachings often do not come to us as new. We also believe that these teachings do not truly reflect our reality. This is because there are people around us who suffer misfortune even if they obey the word of God, and on the other hand, there are people who live well even if they do not believe in God.

So, many Christians today fail to take a clear attitude toward the teachings of the Bible and live in an ambiguous position. In other words, real life is handled according to the principles of the world, and religious life follows the mechanisms of the church. The reason these things happen in our lives is because we do not



accurately understand the teachings of the Bible. So this situation happens not only to us, but it also happened to the ancient Israelites.

Body: Choose Life

So, in today's text, Moses urges the Israelites to choose whether to follow God or another god. This is Moses' strong admonition and command for the Israelites to follow God. Moses says in Deuteronomy 30:19; **“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”**

The key point in this verse is **“Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”** Perhaps someone is thinking in their mind, “Under normal circumstances, without exception, everyone would choose life, but would anyone choose death?”

In fact, the reason we work hard from morning to night to earn money is to preserve our lives and live happily. The fact that we can love, hate, rejoice, and grieve in our lives is proof that we are alive.

However, in human life, without exception, the moment of death comes when all life ends while breathing and living like this. We all know that death comes to human life without exception. The problem is that we usually do not think seriously about life and death. This is because there are more things that we urgently need to solve rather than seriously worry about **‘life and death.’**

The most common thing humans need to sustain life is money. Most people are convinced that money guarantees us a happy life. People’s faith and confidence in money cause them to lose interest in **‘life’**. Furthermore, money makes people more interested in creating conditions for living a comfortable life.

Also, the reason people are not interested in **‘life’** is because of their misunderstanding of the life we possess. People consider life as their own. So, to manage their lives well, people eat well, exercise hard, and take time to rest. But what we must remember is that even though we eat well, exercise, and take time to rest to preserve and maintain our lives, life is essentially owned by the Lord.

However, even if we acquire, enjoy, and achieve the money, health, power, and fame that we believe in, and we are confident these will bring us happiness and security in life, it does not mean that these things will bring us complete happiness.

I like listening to different genres of music. There are many people in the world with special talent and expertise in music. However, music is not something that only people with special talents and expertise can enjoy. There are people who enjoy the richness that music brings even if they are not good at playing an instrument or singing. Conversely, there are those who are good at playing musical instruments, singing well, and have a professional understanding of music, but cannot enjoy the richness that music provides. There are many people in the world who are not happy even though they have a lot of money, health, power, and fame. On the other hand, there are many cases of the opposite.

Therefore, for those who know how to reflect on the essence of life, having money is not a decisive issue for happiness. Perhaps, there are people who think in their hearts, “The pastor is right, but it’s hard to live like that in reality!”

My son is a junior high school student who loves the English Premier League soccer. A few days ago, I observed my son searching for plane tickets to London. If I were rich, I would immediately buy a plane ticket to London to grant my son's wish to watch his favorite teams play. But I couldn't do that. Those who hear my story probably think in their hearts; “Pastor! How important money is in real life!”. But I'm not unhappy because I can't get my son a plane ticket and he can't watch the Premier League in person, which he loves so much.



In fact, my son enjoys just looking up plane tickets to London. I don't know whether my son will go to England to watch the Premier League or not. Regardless, we can still experience happiness. Achieving what we wish for is not the only way to bring us happiness.

I'll say it again, if we give serious reflection and interest in **'life'**, we can be free from the desperation of life. And we can experience happiness.

Now, let's go back to today's text. For the Israelites who spent 40 years living a barren life in the wilderness, Canaan was a place that symbolized abundance. For the Israelites, Canaan was a land of hope, guaranteeing their lives and safety compared to the wilderness where their lives were threatened.

However, Moses orders the Israelites, who are hoping for abundance and safety, not to worship the Canaanite gods who symbolize abundance and fertility. How did the Israelites feel when they heard Moses' words? Wouldn't their minds be like those of us in modern society, who pay more attention to the desperation of life than to reflect on the essence of life? So how can we live a life that focuses on the essential issues of life, that are **'life'**?

Moses said in Deuteronomy 3:20; "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)". This verse is in the same vein as when we come to love God the Creator, we will realize how beautiful and good our life is.

In this verse, the phrase 'the LORD is your life' is not vague. This means that God is the Creator. God's creation is beautiful and good. If we truly believed this, we would not think of our lives as poor because we are poor or make less money than others.

Also, because we know that our life is beautiful and good, we recognize that other people's lives are also beautiful and good. This kind of life is valuable not only to me but also to others. If we live with these thoughts, hearts, and attitudes, our lives will be enriched with joy, gratitude, and love.

Conclusion: The Lord is Life.

Now let's summarize today's message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! What is truly important in our lives is to fill our lives with the abundance of love and life given by the Lord.

Therefore, if we draw closer to the Lord who is life and become intimate with God the Father through His Word and a life of obedience, we will have a completely different experience of life and the world than before.

Through that experience, we will discover the true life that exists within ourselves, others, and the creatures created by the Lord. That life will give us the abundance of life without thirst. I pray that we all can enjoy this blessed life.

