



Sermon, Sunday May 19, 2024 “Love the Lord Your God”

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 6:1-9 ¹“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ²so that you and your children and your children’s children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Introduction: The Situation of Ancient Israel and Their Choices

Today is the 7th Sunday of Easter. Today's text, taken from Deuteronomy, is a sermon given by Moses to the Israelites in the wilderness of 'Arabah' just before they entered Canaan, after the Israelites had spent 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus. There are two main reasons why Moses proclaimed the words of this text to the Israelites. First, because the situation in today's text is about the end of the Israelites' 40 years of wilderness life. For the Israelites, life in the wilderness gave them the opportunity to gain freedom through liberation from Egypt, but it was also a time when they experienced a crisis of survival.

In this respect, for the Israelites, the end of their wilderness life was both an opportunity and a crisis. Second, the reason why Moses proclaimed the words of today's text to the Israelites was because of the Canaanite civilization that lay before them. They were on the verge of entering Canaan, where living conditions were greatly improved compared to life in the wilderness. In general, it's easy for people to lose their sense of purpose the moment they think they can have or achieve whatever they want in life.

In verse 3 of today's text, Moses says the following to the Israelites: **“Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.”**

This verse presents a clear way for the Israelites to prosper. However, the lives of the Israelites who entered Canaan were a series of constant crises and trials, as their history proves. The Israelites lost their country to Assyria and Babylon and lived without a country for nearly 2,000 years after Jerusalem was devastated by the Romans in 70 BC.

But why did the Israelites go down the path of ruin instead of taking the path that would lead to prosperity? Even though the Lord said that the Israelites would guarantee their survival, the Israelites continued to complain, and even though the Lord clearly presented a path for them to prosper, they did not follow that path. Was it because they had no faith? Or was it because they had no true prophets? Can we say that we who live today are different from these people?



Body: What does it mean to believe in the Lord?

The trial and error of the Israelites that we can see in the Old Testament is that it was difficult to believe in God. Does this sound strange to you? Let me ask you: Is it easy or difficult for you to believe in the Lord? Please do not take this question from me to mean that it is difficult to come to church every week for worship or that it is difficult to maintain Christian character. If we think of these religious acts as faith, these things are easier to achieve than believing in the Lord. So what does it mean that believing in the Lord is difficult?

Verse 4 of today's text says as follows: **'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.'** According to this verse, the Israelites had to hear the words through Moses before entering Canaan: **'The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.'** This also means that the Israelites did not want to acknowledge God as the one and only Lord.

Moses thought that the Israelites who would enter Canaan would forget the Lord, who had shown them the power of the Exodus and guidance in the wilderness, and would turn their attention to Baal, the god who symbolized the abundance of Canaan. In other words, although the Israelites may outwardly say that they believe in the God of Abraham, Moses thought that ultimately it would be the Canaanite god Baal that dominated their consciousness. So Moses shouted that the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

Moses says the following in verse 5 of the text: **'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.'** This cry of Moses means that the Israelites must focus on the Lord. Moses says that the Israelites must love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength to focus on God. In fact, this is why it is difficult for us to believe in the Lord. In other words, faith in the Lord requires putting everything (our entire being) on the line.

So what does it mean to give our all to the Lord? It means that we are truly and completely dependent on the Lord, rather than using Him as a tool to fulfill our life desires.

Sometimes people use the words 'in the name of the Lord' and 'by faith' to use the Lord to satisfy their desires.

Moses knew that the Israelites would not put forth effort in loving the Lord with all their beings, so he commanded them to do what parents would do to their young children. Verses 7-9 of the text say: **'Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.'** In fact, it is said that devout Jews followed this teaching and hung pieces of paper with God's words on their sleeves or stuck them on their doorposts and gates. The reason Moses gave this command was because he expected the Israelites to focus on the word of God through this method. If we do not do this, there is a high possibility that we will become distant from the Lord.

Conclusion: Shema, (Hebrew: "Hear")

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Now let's summarize today's message. How can we bring prosperity and abundance to our lives? It is total dependence on the Lord and oneness with Him. This is the foundation that allows us to survive and thrive beyond the cultural conditions and environments we find ourselves in.

So Moses declares **'Shema' (Hear)** in verses 3 and 4 of today's text. Listening to the word of the Lord was the most correct way for the Israelites to become one with the Lord. This equally applies to us living today.

If the Word of the Lord does not really govern our lives, we can never exist or thrive in any situation. Some people may not agree with these claims of the Bible. This is because there are people around us who have everything that others would envy, even if they do not have the word of the Lord.



However, without exception, emptiness and meaninglessness come to human life. Additionally, the emptiness and meaninglessness that comes to their lives strongly leads them to a life of following the fulfillment of their desires rather than a life of faith. In this process, people's spirituality is exhausted and destroyed.

Therefore, we should not live with the thought that if we achieve something in the world, our lives will be happy or satisfying. Whatever we are trying to achieve, if it is not one with the Lord through His Word, all we accomplish will be empty and meaningless in the end.

So, how can we hear the word of the Lord? In fact, there is not just one way. If possible, we need to frequently access the word of the Lord and study the Bible properly according to our circumstances.

If we often read the Bible with the right attitude, we will go into the depth of the Word.

Those who enter the deep world of the Word in this way have the foundation to flourish in the true sense. Because only the Lord can fill our lives spiritually.

To have faith means to completely depend on the Lord, and to live with the mindset and attitude that unity with the Lord is the highest value and purpose of our lives. That is the only way we can experience abundance through the Lord and not through idols. I hope that everyone can enjoy this blessing. **Amen!**

