

Lectionary Overview – C
13th Sunday after Pentecost 9/4/2022

By Craig Sanders, Lay Leader Network and Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Duluth MN

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

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^b 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 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.

Deuteronomy is one of five books of The Torah in the Jewish Bible (Old Testament). It is set at the end of the Jews spending 40 years in the wilderness, after their release from bondage in Egypt. Moses has led them to a point where they are about to cross the Jordan River near Jericho into the land of Canaan which God has given them. It's been tortuous at times in the desert with little to eat compared to life they left. Many even questioned Moses' leadership.

Moses, at 120 years old will now transfer leadership to Joshua. Before he does that, over the time of one month, Moses delivers three sermons recorded here. The first sermon, (1:1-4:43) is historical. A review of what God has done for Israel. These events happened between 1440 BCE and 1400 BCE. It's a renewal of God's Covenant given on Mt. Sinai when Moses received the Ten Commandments. The Second Sermon, (4:44- Chapter 26) is a lengthy legal presentation of the law. It describes in some detail what God expects from Israel. This section describes Ceremonial Laws, Civil Laws. Special attention is given to prohibition of idolatry and other pagan practices. The Third Sermon, (27:1-Chapter 34, from which our lesson today is taken. Discusses what God will do for Israel. Ratification of the Covenant, the Palestinian Covenant. In summary, the children of Israel when considering the new life will choose between obeying and not obeying God's laws. If they worship this new country's idols they will be choosing between prosperity and adversity, and even between life versus death.

Psalm 1 All

- 1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his Law they meditate day and night.
- 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.
- 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- 6 for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

This poem of comparisons between good and the bad choices, between obeying the law or not doing so is in line with the precepts of today's Deuteronomy lesson. "Happy" here means blessedness, an inner peace that dwells within us. "Law" is a gracious instruction, and invitation to life. "Delight" is our response in striving after higher, non-materialistic aspects of life. The Torah is God's word to humankind. The 150 Psalms are humankind's response to God with thanksgiving, lament, and other human emotions. While Psalm 1 begins with "Happy", Psalm 150 ends with "Praise the Lord!".

Epistle of Paul to
Philemon verses 1-21

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To our beloved coworker Philemon, 2 to our sister Apphia, to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God always when I mention you in my prayers, 5 because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that the partnership of your faith may become effective as you comprehend all the good that we share in Christ. 7 I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother. 8 For this reason, though I am more than bold enough in Christ to command you to do the right thing, 9 yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love...and I, Paul, do this as an old man and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. 10 I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. 11 Formerly, he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. 12 I am sending him, that is, my own hear, back to you. 13 I wanted to keep him with me so that he might minister to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel, 14 but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. 15 Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for the long term, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother...especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has wronged you in any way or woe you anything, charge that to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

The setting is in a Roman prison in 60-61 CE where Paul is writing to Philemon, a wealthy aristocratic Gentile in Colosse (in modern day western Turkey) who has become a Christian. He holds church services in his home, the common practice of the early church. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, ran away from Philemon and went to Rome to blend in and be safe. Paul met him and converted him to Christianity. A runaway slave, if found, would either be killed or severely beaten. So, sending Onesimus back to Philemon would be a major test of forgiveness on the part of Philemon as an owner but also as a Christian. Slavery was still a common practice, but owners could free slaves if they wished.

Gospel

Luke 14:25-33

The Cost of Discipleship

²⁵ Now large crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

Jesus lays out the stark requirements for discipleship. He does not want people who merely hang on and who will desert Him when the cost and burden are too much. Be careful in your choosing. There is also the element of proclaiming that one is a Christian, but who is criticized and mocked when the mission and positive words result in surrender. The word "hate" in verse 26 is said more for impact than to imply that one must express outright hatred for parents.