

February 12, 2017

Choices Bringing Life Not Death

### PRAYER

Let the words of my mouth be mediations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

### SERMON

In the Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy this morning, we hear Moses speaking to the Hebrews. The group that he has brought out of slavery in Egypt. And they had been wandering in the Sinai desert for some forty years. And this is his final discourse to them before they enter the promised land. He himself, will not enter that promised land. And he says to them, now is the time to choose. You have a choice to make. I put before you life and death, blessing and curse. If you choose life, then you will follow the commandments of God. And God will be in covenant with you. You will be his people, he will be your God, and you will have life and you will have it abundantly.

But if you choose not to follow God then your days will not be long in that promised land. It's all about the choice you make. About how you will live your life from this point on as you go into the land that was promised to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. The patriarchs. And now that promise is yours. But with the promise comes the responsibility to live according to the covenant. To live according to the law. It's about choices.

Have you ever thought about how many choices you make every day? We like to sometimes think about just the big choices that we make. But we make so many choices every single day. Every single situation that we encounter, we make choices. From the time that we get up in the morning and choose to get up and face the day. We choose to go to work. I know some of you think it's really not your choice. But you've chosen the path that you are on and you can choose to go back to bed. They can choose not to pay you. But you can choose to do whatever you want. You have that ability.

And as you go through your day you make choices at every turn. And every choice has a consequence. Every choice can be made also according to your faith, according to your obedience to God. Some are more obvious than others. But every choice that you make during the day comes from somewhere. And for Christian, part of the input to make the choice comes from our faith, comes

from our belief, comes from our promises to God and God's promises to us. It's all about choices.

I'm going to move forward to the Gospel reading this morning. How many of you felt uncomfortable when I was reading that Gospel reading? If you are not saying yes in your mind, then I need to reread it. Because it's uncomfortable. Jesus is, this is a continuation of the sermon on the Mount. You know he's given us the attitudes and he's talked about being salt and light. And now he says, you've heard it was said in ancient times. Thou shalt not commit murder. We all know that, we've heard that. One of the top ten commandments. But I tell you that even if you get angry you will be judged. Even if you insult your brother or sister you will be judged.

That makes me uncomfortable. It makes me uncomfortable because I know that I do that. You've heard it said, thou shalt not commit adultery. But I tell you that even if you men look at a woman with lust in her heart, you have already committed adultery with her. Anybody not guilty of that, maybe a little bit? What is Jesus trying to say? What, that we have to live perfect lives?

I think he's going to try to help us to see that none of these things happened in a moment. One does not get angry and commit murder in a second. One does not have lust in his heart for a woman and commits adultery. It's all about the choices that had been made prior to that. That's why he says we need to start way back here. We need to start with those things that make us angry and the choices that we make to deal with that or to not deal with that.

Just a few weeks ago there was a story on the news that a man that was driving down the road probably had a bad day, I'm assuming. A woman cuts him off or that's how he feels about it. His response is to pick up a gun that he has with him and start shooting at her. Luckily, he didn't kill her. But he would have, he could have. That would-be murder, he would be subject to judgement. But do you think that this urge to kill that person came from that one moment. That one thing that happened in his life at that given moment on that given day. It was all about the decisions he made coming up. Where he gets angry at this or that and never deals with it. Never really chooses to deal with it and let it go.

So, it builds, it accumulates. And so, the next response might be one of greater anger. Might be one of being more insulting. The response goes up until he gets to a point where this one little incident is enough to trigger the desire to kill. Isn't Jesus trying to say to us that we as citizens of God's kingdom are to be aware of these first choices that we have made? To deal with the feelings that we have,

to understand what God is calling us to as his children and as citizens of God's kingdom. To be able to forgive when someone insults or hurts us. Or we feel like we've been slighted. And to not let it begin to build up in us. To lead us to more and more drastic responses. To the point that we are willing to kill.

Is he not trying to say to the people, be aware of your feelings. You have been joined husband and wife. And you are called to love another in a way that is different from all other relationships in your life. But if you let these little things start creeping in and you begin to respond by feeling more and more distance from your spouse. Then the temptation grows, becomes greater. And what is an infatuation one day may turn into flirtation the next day. And that flirtation then turns into what feels like a deeper relationship and we continue to draw back from the one that we have committed our life to. Until we commit the adultery that has been building up within us.

It's all about the choices that we make and in choosing to deal with those in a positive way or to bring God into the first choices that we make. To at least understand that there is some attraction, to understand that there is some anger. And to deal with that and choose to deal with that in a way that is appropriate in the kingdom of God. To deal with that in such a way that we let it go. That we are reminded of who we are and how we are called to live in the world with one another.

Jesus says, "If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It's better to go into heaven without that part of your body than it is to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and fling it away because it is better to go into Heaven without that body part than to have your whole body thrown into hell."

Your eye never causes you to sin. Your hand never causes you to sin. It's all the choices that you have made going up to that action that causes us to sin. Those choices that draw us away from God rather than to God. To see the world not from a Godly perspective of blessing but to see it as a very self-centered I want what I want, when I want it.

We as baptized Christians have become children of God. We have become citizens of God's kingdom. And we are called to allow the Holy Spirit as a part of our lives, to direct our choices. Those hundreds of choices that we make every day. To allow those choices to be good. To bring blessing to us and to the people that we are dealing with in our lives. We are called to make choices, that bring life, that bring joy, that bring peace, that bring justice, that brings mercy. That

honors the integrity of every human being. All the promises that we have made in our baptismal covenant. To allow that to focus our choices so that they bring blessing and not curse. So, that they bring life and not death. You are children of God. You are citizens of God's kingdom. Deal with the choices in your life in a Godly way. And your life will be blessed. And you will receive that reward in which we all striven for in our lives. That eternal life and peace that only God can give. The hope that we find in Jesus Christ.