

Sermon September 4, 2022 – Pentecost 13

Chosen People Choose Life

Deuteronomy 30:15–20

Dear Friends in Christ

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the giver of life!

One thing we all want is life. Life is a precious thing that we treasure, desire it, want it, and make efforts to keep it.

However, sometimes, it feels like life is being sucked out of us by everything around, so we struggle to keep it.

Ironically though, the way we want to keep life is by doing things that in many instances attempt with the very life we want to keep, we work hard, and seldom take good rest, we eat unhealthy foods, we hold on to unhealthy habits and so on. And more, we want live just for ourselves, here and now, as if the future didn't matter. Seldom, we seldom think about the generations to come, and work towards a good heritage for the future generations. Is interesting, sad and even mind boggling to see how this generation wanting selfishly to preserve life, does so for the present generation destroying resources for the ones to come. Yet the command of the Old Testament reading for us today is to choose life not only for this day but for what is to come. "Therefore, choose life, that you and your offspring may live." God says.

Choose life! What does choosing life really mean? The first thing that comes to mind is saying no to abortion. The statement of "choose life" has been associated with the abortion debate, and as such, it always stirs things up, because some think abortion is a political issue, or because we don't want to offend someone, so abortion becomes a controversial issue.

Our text, however, is not about abortion. It's about what we, as God's people, base our choices on. It's about choosing life, true life, its about choosing the God of life and saying not to god of death.

In the context of the Scriptures, there are two kinds of definitions of life. One has to do with the act of breathing, moving, existing, in the material, the body. But the other

understanding of life has to do with the soul, the spirit, the being. And both are important and interrelated.

And the meaning of the word life in this reading of Deuteronomy 30 is about the life that sustains your soul, your spirit the being. And when you choose this life, the spiritual life, your material, physical life will be affected too.

In other words, what you do with your spirit, in your soul will ultimately affect your body, so will affect the kind of love you will show too.

Studies have shown it to be so. That people who attends church tend to live longer and happier. I wonder why! And no, it is not so much that take a 15-minute nap during the Service, but because they are choosing life, that's why life is better for a Christian. That's why and much more, God commands His people to choose life so they will live longer and happier.

However, this choosing doesn't happen because we are special and can make wise and intelligent choices, but because we have been chosen already. We have been chosen in Christ, and we weren't chosen because we were special people, but because of our condition. As you see we were under the dominion of the gods of death, being destroyed, life sucked out of us, all because of sin, but God took charge and came to rescue us, he did so through his Son Jesus. In other words, those whose sins have been forgiven are, in that forgiveness, chosen as God's people. As the Apostle Peter says in His letter: "But you"—all of you, the Church—"are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Through baptism indeed we were set apart as his chosen people. There in Baptism made you his child, and now as such, you are to make wise decisions, you are to choose that which is lasting and life giving.

These choices you are going to make are based on the choices God sets before you. Those choices are good or evil, blessing or curse. But both flow from the choice of life or death. Good and blessing follow the choice of life, and evil and curses follow the choice of death. And yet, at the heart of the act of making a choice lies something deeper than life or death. It is the choice to trust God or turn away to other gods. That was Israel's constant problem. That's why God warned, "But if your heart turns away,

and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them” (v 17), that’s when evil and curses will come.

Now, we have heard about other gods before, right? Usually of pagan gods. But the reality is that there is only one God of life, and the usurper, who thinks is god, is really the god of death, which can take the form of other things, or through other things lure us into its trap. And we do fall into that trap, for the things that we worship the most, we convert into our own god, but don’t me mistaken, our own god can and will lead us to the god of death. Choose then God says. Life or death.

“Choose life!” God commands. But that phrase can stir things up, doesn’t it. It makes us Lutheran uncomfortable to use the word choose. As Christian we after baptism we can certainly choose life. To follow what God has set before us! But we may be uncomfortable with that formulation, for, of course, we who are by nature dead in our trespasses and sins cannot choose Christ, our nature is prone to follow death just like the world does.

Take abortion for example. Abortion is fundamentally choosing the god of death, thinking that that god of death can rescue us, for it gives the appearance of doing so, but in reality, “evil and curses” follow in its wake. Think of the people negatively affected by an abortion decision. An unborn child is destroyed. The mother and father of that child have their lives changed forever. Grandparents, siblings, friends, society itself—all suffer greatly as the result of a single abortion. Death does not relieve the burden; “evil and curses” follow in its wake.

Although, we need to be reminded that is not the sin of abortion that separates us from God. Sin separates us from God. We all stand equally guilty before him, doesn’t matter what kind of sin it is. But the sin of abortion, because of its nature, can be more difficult to deal with. So, if any anyone is burdened with this particular sin, today, please hear us, you are welcome here with all the rest of us sinners! After all our church exists to heal people, for that is what the Lord does, He heals us. You are welcome as one chosen in Christ Jesus and cleansed by his blood. But you, more than anyone else here, know the effects of choosing death to solve our problems. It doesn’t work. And the consequences are great.

But it is not only abortion the issue, but there are also those things around us or that we have heard of that have eroded the value of life, assisted suicide; child abuse, teen suicide, killings in schools, wars... all have increased dramatically, contributing to the erosion of physical life, and with that spiritual life as well. And for those of us watching from a distance can be affected spiritually, for we ask, how can God allow bad things to happen.

But here is the thing, people like to chose death as the rescuer-god but know that that will always lead to "evil and curses." There has never been a choice of death that leads to life for all bring evil and curses.

Except the death of One who brings life. The one of whom we hear: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Hebrew 2:14–15). Jesus chose suffering and death to pay the price we owed God because of our sin and destroyed death once and for all through his resurrection from the dead. Jesus chose death to rescue us. We never have to choose death for our rescue! Jesus chose you, and you have been baptized into his death and resurrection.

That is your assurance: you can trust him and choose life! You can trust God because he has set his love on you in Christ. You can trust God because he promises that nothing can ever separate you from that love. You can trust God because he promises never to leave or forsake you. You can trust God because he promises to be at work in every aspect of your life, accomplishing his will. You can trust God because he loves you and has proven it in Jesus' death and resurrection. You can trust God because he "sets his love upon you" every time at his Holy Meal when you receive the price he paid to rescue you, his chosen.

You can trust God and choose life and be assured good and blessings will follow. "You and your offspring" will live (v 19c) God says. Generations are involved! The choice of life means life continues. It means new life can be given in Holy Baptism. The choice of life means love for "the Lord your God" will increase as you focus on his

love. It means obedience to “his voice” will increase as you trust in him more and more, “holding fast to him” (v 20).

That’s why we need to point out the things that kills us. We need to choose life. We need to lead our community to procure life. What a message we must share with one another, reminding one another that no matter how difficult the circumstances, no matter how broken they are, God’s grace has chosen us in Christ. That we belong to God, and that we desire others to belong too. We can trust him. We can choose life. We can choose to uphold the value he gives to life and to defend the life of the vulnerable. We can choose life and care for those among us who are weary and burdened. We can choose life and share the forgiveness of Christ with one another when mistakes are made.

We can trust God and that means choosing life. And that life will spill over into the things we say and the things we do in society, we can have an influence on those who would choose death to rescue them from problems.

As we chose life we can be the face of a Loving God as we walk besides people in their needs, we can we can support pregnancy centers and hospice centers through volunteer hours or financial gifts. We can pray for those providing such help and for those who need it so desperately. We can coach others as well, especially the younger generations, to improve their lives. We can say now to all kinds of excuses we have that lead us to death, and instead we can say yes to life in Christ and share that life with others. As we share the love of Jesus, the Holy Spirit may very well give us opportunity to share the word of Jesus, the source of our love and concern and the true rescuer from all struggles, and not only from what we have learned but from our own experiences we can share others by our testimony, the testimony of what God has done in our lives. After Jesus desires for us to be his witness.

“Choose life!” for Jesus himself has come to give us life. And is here to stir up our faith and trust in God, who chose us as his special people. When faced with difficult situations, we can trust him and choose life and be assured that good and blessing will follow and that we and our offspring will live!

In his name, amen.