

2/16/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Finally, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the people of Israel were almost to their destination. Across the Jordan River lay the land of Canaan, which God had promised to give to them. But before the people entered the Promised Land, Moses, who had led them for the past forty years, confronted them with a monumental choice.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that 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. Deuteronomy 30:15-20

The choice was no less than the choice between life and death. If the people obeyed the Lord and followed his ways, they would enjoy the Lord's blessings and live long in the land that God was about to give to them. However, if they chose to turn away from God and instead worship the false gods of the pagan peoples who lived around them, they were, in effect, choosing death. They would forfeit God's blessings and would not live long in the land God had promised them.

Which would they choose? To us, the answer seems obvious. They should, of course, choose life. Why would anyone choose death and curses instead of life and blessings? The problem is that no one—neither we nor the people of Israel—has the ability to choose life on their own. The sad truth that God reveals to us in his Word is that if left to ourselves, we all would choose death rather than life.

But even though the people of Israel on their own had no power to choose life, with God's help they could. As God continued to work in their hearts and strengthen their faith, they would be able to love him, listen to him, hold fast to him, and find in him their life.

The same is true for us. As God works through his Word and sacraments to create and strengthen faith in our hearts, he enables us to remain faithful to him. He works in us both the desire and the ability to obey him, listen to him, and hold fast to him. He alone is our life. And with him dwelling in our hearts, our choice is clear. By his strength, we choose life.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, always dwell in my heart, that with your strength I may always choose life. Amen.

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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