

Choose Life

Pastor Corey Aker, St. Paul Lutheran Church-Paducah, KY

Text: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Doctrinal Locus: 3rd Article-The Holy Spirit calls us to faith

Function: That the hearers will rejoice in the fact that Life Chooses Them!

1. **Countless people have died for their conviction that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.** Nearly all of the first apostles were murdered for this belief. Stephen was stoned to death as he asked his Lord to forgive the very people killing him. Tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die in the exact same manner as his Lord. James was beheaded. Philip was crucified. Matthias was stoned and beheaded. Andrew was crucified. Mark was beaten to death. Paul was beheaded. Thomas was killed by a spear. Luke was hanged. And the list of Christian martyrs certainly does not end there. These people chose death rather than deny their faith in Jesus Christ. There are nations in our world where it is illegal to be Christian. In fact, conversion to Christianity is punishable by death in some Islamic nations. These faithful saints are dying for their faith in their Lord Jesus Christ! They choose death over denial. And our Lord promises that they will have life eternal!

2. In the Old Testament reading, Moses, as if he were some modern day game show host, stood before some two million men, women, and children. He told them all of the Lord's Commandments. The Law of the Lord. The expectations of the Almighty. And now he is calling heaven and earth as witnesses to all this. **The Israelites have two paths laid out before them. Life and Death.** Behind door number one is life! Long life in the Promised land where you and your spouse will live and have a nice large family. The Lord will bless you. All this and much more can be yours if you choose life! But if you do not choose life, you're left with death. That's right, behind door number two is death! You will not live long in the Promised Land; you will not enjoy your time there; you will not have a large family; and the Lord will not bless you. All this, and much worse will be yours if you choose death. And so the paths were clearly drawn

for the Israelites. And Moses pleaded with them “CHOOSE LIFE, that you and your offspring may live!”

3. **The Israelites wanted to choose life.** In fact, they proclaimed they would obey the Lord Almighty down to the last letter of the law. They said this was good to them. Now don't get me wrong, I don't think the Israelites were lying at this time. I don't think they were planning to go the route they ended up going. I don't even think they considered they could end up as depraved as they were at the end. **But after their initial proclamation that they chose life, their actions proved that they actually went with door number two.** Their idol worshiping showed that they chose death instead of life. And there were consequences for their sins. Their relationships were troubled with each other. Nations waged war against them constantly. Kings rose up and lead them into utter apostasy. Things got worse and worse in the land of Israel. Up to the point that they were literally kicked out of the land. Sent into exile. Living in a land they didn't know. This is what they chose when they chose death over life.

4. So we have martyrs choosing death and receiving life eternal. What happened to these people who chose life, but ended up turning to the path of death? Who ended up forsaking their God? Who ended up turning to other gods to satisfy their sinful desires? These people perished. They found eternal death. In the Old Testament reading, Moses tells the people there are ultimately two end results of their decision: if you choose death, you will perish eternally. If you choose life, you will live eternally in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! **So Moses wasn't just talking about what would happen on earth to these people depending on their choice. He was talking about what would happen to them eternally.**

5. **God tells us to choose life, but every indication in ourselves tells us that we are utterly unable to make this choice.** When we truly look at ourselves, we find that we are like the

Israelites. That is, we may state upfront that we're all about loving the Lord and doing His requirements, but when push comes to shove, isn't it a whole lot easier to just give into that nagging temptation. You can run, but you can't hide from that nagging sin that wants you to pay attention to it. Just give in! Just do it! And you now what happens next, don't you? Temptation overcomes you. Your intentions were to choose life, but temptation leads you to death. Sin leads us down the path of death. Our sinfulness causes us to choose to take what comes behind door number two! Because we are unable to choose life for ourselves. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God. And apart from the Holy Spirit, that's the way we like it!

6. **If you don't believe me, try going this week without sinning.** Try going through your work week without giving into temptation. See if you are able to even go a single day without needing to repent for something you said, or did, or thought about someone else. See if you can do it. You will find that because of your sinfulness, it is impossible for you to choose life.

7. Praise the Lord, life chooses you! Jesus Christ is life! And He chooses you! The Gospel according to Saint John is filled with passages that indicate that Jesus is life. In John 1:1, it is through Jesus, who is the Word of God, that all life is created! In John 3:16, Jesus tells us that all who believe in Him will not perish but inherit eternal life! 5:21, He tells us that He raises people back to life! 6:35, Jesus is the bread of life. 11:25, He proclaims that He is the resurrection and the life. 14:6, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I think you get John's point. Where Jesus is, there also is life! Jesus is life and He brings life! **He brings life to people now; and He promises to raise all who believe in Him to eternal life with Him.** He is your life! He is the One behind door number one. Not waiting for you to open up and call on him. Not even waiting for you to choose Him. He busts the door down and Life Chooses you!

8. I want to warn you about this issue. There are people out there trying to tell you, out right preaching to you that you can choose to have a better life now by simply choosing to think positively. **Positive thinking is good and beneficial, but it IS NOT THE GOSPEL.** Your positive thinking is not what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ went to the cross to produce. He didn't die so you would feel better about yourself. You were in a state that no amount of good thought vibes would ever rescue you from. You were on the road to certain and eternal death. This is what Jesus went to the cross to save you from. Jesus Christ who is life; Jesus Christ who is the resurrection; He chooses you for eternal life! You have eternal life! You Christians are guaranteed to be resurrected from the dead to life! Jesus Christ is your life now and He is your life forever!

9. **Because Jesus Christ is your life, and you now know this, take another look at the things you do in your life.** Some things you may want to examine and stop doing. Things that are contrary to God's desire for your life. These things lead to death. Other things in your life that seemed everyday and mundane now should take on a special meaning for you. Because Christ is your life, you proclaim this by doing what He has prepared in advance for you to do. Mothers, raise good children. Fathers, provide for your family. Workers, do your work to the best of your ability. Children, obey your parents. Students, work diligently in your studies. Doctors and nurses, work to bring people back to health. Teachers, teach our children in the knowledge that will lead them to become productive citizens. Because Jesus is your life, all this stuff you do in your every day life matters! It matters to your neighbor! And you do these things to the Glory of God because Jesus is your life!

10. Finally, **I want to return to our list of martyrs from the beginning of this sermon.** Apostle after apostle chose death instead of denial of their Lord. What caused them to be able to

do this? Was there something special about them? Did they know something you and I don't know? What allowed them to be able to give up their life for their Lord? The Holy Spirit was at work in them and He kept them firm in the faith that He called them to. The same Holy Spirit has called you to faith. And He promises to work in your life to keep you firm in the one true faith in Jesus Christ. He brings you to life, now and in eternity! Life has chosen you and life holds you in His loving and caring nail marked hands. Amen!