**“Choose Life”**

Psalm 119:1-8

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

Epiphany 6

What is “set before you is life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord you God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for **He is your Life and Length of Days**.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

“Choosing Life” is not choosing things to **do or act like**. It’s “choosing”, always, **HIM who chose you through the Words of promise attached to your baptism that He caused (and causes) you to hear and enjoy and be (then) / do things according to His will for your life, being useful in this world by caring for it**. **HE, remember** (and never forget that point from the last line of the Deuteronomy text and Jesus’ pointing-of-it-out-in-detail in His sit-down Sermon on the Mount), “**HE is your Life and Length of Days**”.

The Good News Epiphany is **that very fact:** **HE** as “Life” and, even, “Length of Days”, Him **FOR YOU** by John 3:16’s promise and Him **IN YOU** by baptismal promise (Romans 6) and Him **AFFECTING YOU** by following suit (caring the ways He does). We **act because we appreciate what grace has made us to be (of and in “Life” with God in Christ Jesus)**, so

* why **would we stew in anger with a brother or sister** (killing them that way as Jesus says). We’d **defend** all neighbors rather than hurt them (why wouldn’t we / Jesus would and did).
* We’d not be of a “**lustful intent**”, knowing the **purity of ourselves by God’s intention** and the **purity-intent of God for all of His created flesh** that we should **only see as that**.
* We’d understand God’s visual for us of our “**being of one flesh with Him**” by our marriage in this life. **Divorce** (unless already having happened by adultery before paperwork is ever signed) forgets **that Gospel of** **connection dictated by commitment** …
* and **that commitment is of our Good word of promise ourselves**. As **God had** promised to save us by becoming of “one flesh with us” to die for us, **our (also) “Yes” and “No” is as binding as it always should be**.

**Text**

There is a **death alternative**. “If your heart turns away from God, and you will not hear Him, but are drawn away (and go) to worship other gods” (small-“g”-enticing’s like entertainment propositions, self-service, self-security in money or properties or some sense of power in yourselves or securities by just morality or position), “serving them as if they are your god, you **shall surely perish**. You shall **not live long**” in any blessed existence (as in grace and mercy offered and bestowed, health even guarded by God) but not living in that because you’d not needed God for His commands (so why ask Him to pay attention to you in your struggles?). So, in this world and the next, **death** is a choice that gains nothing Good in Heaven certainly, and maybe no divine benefits here even.

The difference between sinning and repenting of that sin and **PRACTICING** **sins** with, then, **its choice of that as a death-path unrepentant for it**, that’sthe **damnable end result of the bad choice** (following what’s **counter to** who you are if baptized into Christ, making the wrong choices on a **PRACTICED** basis, staying distant from God, “turning away or being drawn away” from Him in your “heart” / neglectful of Him).

And the **warning about that** was said to those who **should always know better**. Both Deuteronomy and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount were to the **Visible Church (to Promised People saved and delivered into a Good place) addressed with a reminder of “death” or “Life’s” choice**.

So here it is **brought to you and I this day**. Perhaps **our warning** is to knock out of us **complacency and a lack of appreciation for grace and mercy** (like it was in the Wilderness journey of those before us or of the curious listening to Jesus on a hillside).

If the warning makes **you** **uncomfortable**, then **join all who should receive it painfully**. **Those who care** are warned and reminded-if-ever-tempted to **think too much of ourselves apart from salvation** or “**PRACTICING**” **sinfulness and acting unappreciative of the gift that was gotten in baptisms rebirth and how** that should make us **think differently / more humbly**, and **act differently (more like a faithful disciple of Christ)**.

Yet **here’s** where that transitional text serves as **saving Good News** for us who are condemned by our **inabilities** and maybe even **unwillingnesses** to attend to God’s Commands in their original sense like Jesus described them. Last week’s reading from Matthew 5 ended with verse 17’s **clarification about all that** … and serves as Gospel for us with today’s reading also: “**I HAVE COME**” **(JESUS SAYS)** **not to abolish the Laws, but to, MYSELF, FULFILL THEM**”.

So, **Who is** the non-hater (instead lover in full compassion of even those most despised and in need of compassion)? Well, **Jesus is … the Son of God Who came to have compassion on all!** **Who** sees everyone from the very purest of eyes? **Jesus does! Who’s** the committed Groom Promised and committed to lovingly embrace His wife even if return of that embrace is never really offered back? That’s **Jesus, faithful, the Son from the Father in Heaven and Him always faithful and always will be!** And **Who’s** Word of Promise and Commitment is as Good as He is, Himself … never hedging or misleading or just conditional in His vows: “**Him, God in Christ Jesus**” (**the Word Himself, on earth to live pure and then die having taken upon Himself corruption and sinful and an alien to Him destructive nature to carry to a cross**). God “**loved** the world that way, and that’s so **those believing might (instead of perishing) have, rather, eternal Life” … with that Life begun in this life**.

**Application**

The rest is, just, the **application of that … the doing of our “duty” because of it all**. And yes, of course, the demands of God are “steep” and they must be exercised from out of a **renewed heart by, only, God’s renewal**. That renewal is to be demonstrated / visibly expressed. But (and most importantly) they are the tough things that get done by God **through His people as they** **know them** **conceived as duties first inside … and, then, outside, to happen as we do them as is our “duty to”**.

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In Jesus’ name. Amen.