Better – Part 5

# Choose Life

# (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

This morning, we’re in part five as we wrap up our series with a message entitled “Choose Life”. We’ve been talking about how when life hands you choices you want to choose better because we understand that God has something indescribably better for us than anything that the world has to offer. And so, I promise you that the Word we’re going to read today has the potential to change you, becoming a defining moment in your destiny.

Now, we’ve seen over the past few weeks that often it’s the small things that make a big difference. And so, hopefully you’ve been encouraged to make some changes, maybe to get in better shape, eat better, to be more spiritually focused, spending more time with your family, or maybe to quit that annoying habit. I don’t know what it would be, but I pray that God would give you the power to choose better and achieve victory in that area.

Today we’re going to discover that life is a series of recurring choices, accumulated results, and individual days, and so, it’s often the small things that make a big difference. You see, every day God offers us a choice to follow him, to go his way, to serve him, and that choice is so much better than what the world has to offer. The problem is many people don’t believe this, in fact for many years I didn’t believe it.

As a matter of fact, before I began following Christ I couldn’t understand why you would want to be miserable following a bunch of rules when you could be having fun. And I guess you could say that it was fun for a while, but how many of you know that sin is a lot like sneezing? You know, it feels good coming out but then there’s a mess everywhere, right? And so, there are consequences. This morning, there may be some of you that feel that way and I pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the hearing of God’s Word that you may be convinced that God’s way is so much better.

Now, I’m not saying that you’ll never have a bad day, that you’ll never have trials or difficulties, but no matter what you face in this life, when you do it with God it’s just better. Isaiah records these words of God’s in chapter 55, he writes,

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways… As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

And so, God’s ways are better, because no matter what’s going on in your life you can have the peace of God which goes beyond all understanding. Someone once said, "To have God in our life, doesn't mean sailing on a boat with no storms, it means having a boat that no storm can sink!" And so, your peace and contentment today is not based upon your feelings or your circumstances, but you can have joy unspeakable because of God’s presence, his calling and purpose in your life. When you choose to walk according to his ways it’s just better.

The choice that’s presented to us today in the Word of God reminds us of the blessing of choosing to walk with God. You see, there are certain principles at work in the universe that no amount of power, influence, wealth, or even luck can change. These are rock-solid foundational principles that God impressed upon his people that affect whether they’re blessed or if they’re not. These words present a choice found in the book of Deuteronomy where Moses spoke to the people of Israel as they were about to enter the promised land. Here in chapter 30, Moses is nearing the end of his life, he knows his time is short, and he’s spent a few chapters now talking about the covenant that God had made with them. He presents them with a choice that each one of them must make, and he encourages them to choose better, choosing the kind of life that God will bless, instead of the kind of life that God can’t bless. And so, in verse 15, Moses concludes this rather lengthy message that we’ll read today saying:

“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).

Now, when Moses spoke these words like a father to his children, the Israelites were just months away from entering the land that God had promised them hundreds of years before. What had once been so close, because of their sin and rebellion had turned this trip into a forty-year march through the wilderness and now Moses wanted to make sure they didn’t mess it up. He wanted to make sure they continued to walk in covenant with God, living under the blessing of God, but he knew that ultimately the choice was theirs. And so, he wanted to make sure that they understood three important, unchangeable truths about being on the receiving end of the blessings of God. These three immovable truths are found in the text we just read and the first one I want you to notice is that life is a series of recurring choices.

## 1. Recurring Choices

You see, you and I are the sum total of the choices that we’ve made in the past; and the choices that we’re making today will determine not only who we become, but what we’re able to do tomorrow. And yet many people think that life is merely a series of circumstances. That things happen, you can’t help it, you can’t do much about it, but you just have to take it as it comes. But the Bible teaches differently. We’re not victims of circumstance, we’re not driven by chance, we’re driven by the choices that we make. And so, the Bible teaches us that each person is responsible, each person is accountable for his or her own life, and therefore each one has a choice. This is what Moses said to the people, he offered them a choice saying,

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Today, just like it was in that day, our lives are made up of recurring choices, choices that you have to make again and again and day after day. For example, just think about your health for a moment. Several times a day you sit down to the table and you make choices. These recurring choices that you make determine not only how well your clothes fit, but also how good you feel, and how long you live. It’s not just one choice you make, it’s a recurring choice, and so you want to choose better.

Consider for a moment how this applies to your relationships, how you speak to your spouse, and how much time you invest in your children. Or what about your spiritual life, how much time do you spend in prayer and Bible study? Or think of how it applies to your financial life, you know, how much you save, invest, and give. You see, these are decisions that you make day after day because that’s what life is, it’s a series of recurring choices.

When I think about my own personal life, my journey toward ministry, toward starting this church, looking back it was a series of recurring choices. Today I’m fulfilling God’s purpose in this moment, but it’s not been without struggles and choices that I’ve had to make. The decision to change vocations, to study and prepare for ministry, becoming involved in church planting, first in Fairfield and now in Emmitsburg, life has been a series of recurring choices.

Moses said, “You have two options: life or death; blessings or curses.” And he used this powerful word, a catalyst, a life-changing word, “Choose”. He said, “Choose life” because the quality of your life isn’t determined as much by the breaks that you get, as its determined by the choices that you make. We are the sum total of the choices that we’ve made. And when we choose Jesus, the one who the Bible says is:

"The way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

We’re choosing life and blessing, but it’s not a one-time event, it’s a series of recurring choices. If you’re a country music fan you’re probably familiar with George Jones. He recorded many songs over the years and one of them was simply titled “Choices”. In that song George says,

“I guess I’m paying for the things that I have done. If I could go back, oh Lord knows I’d run, but I’m still losing this game of life I play, living and dying with the choices I’ve made” (George Jones).

Like George, we all can say that we’re living and dying with the choices that we’ve made. Which leads us to our second point, not only is life a series of recurring choices, but number two, life is a series of accumulated results.

## 2. Accumulated Results

For example, for those of you that have been married for any length of time at all, you’re well aware that the choices that you’ve made in the past, and the choices that you’re making today will either quench that relationship or cause growth and intimacy. You know, when we consider our marriage vows to love and respect, day by day and year after year there are accumulated results based upon our decision to fulfill those vows or to allow our commitment to fade.

Or I’ve had health problems and maybe you have too; but did you know that sickness rarely arrives in our lives uninvited? It just doesn’t drop in from nowhere. Instead, we often put out the welcome mat, we “leave the light on” so to speak because of our poor health-related habits. Every day when we get up and every time we sit down to eat we make choices that affect our health and our longevity.

Or maybe you’re a single Christian girl and you’re looking for a Christian guy, but you can’t find a Christian guy, so what do you do? You settle for a guy, right? Even though you know that God’s word tells us not to be unequally yoked. I mean the apostle Paul wasn’t beating around the bush when he said,

“Don’t be yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

But he has such a cute smile, right? You know, he’s just so cute. And so, you think you can change him. You know he’s not a Christian, he’s not filled with the Spirit of God, but you think you can change him. Well, let’s fast-forward a little. You date for a while, you get married, and he’s still not changing. As a matter of fact, honestly things are actually getting worse. Maybe he’s accumulating idols, things like his job, his car, the house, or even his recreation or drinking. And suddenly you find that you are light years apart; but that’s why the Bible says in first Corinthians chapter 7,

“She is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39).

And so, it doesn’t get any clearer than that, the choice is yours, but God wants you to choose better. In other words, he must belong to the Lord, he must be born again, he must be a sold-out follower of Jesus Christ. Now maybe years later, some of you find that you’re literally sleeping in the bed that you made. And that’s because all of the things that have happened in your life are not just random occurrences, they’re accumulated results, the effect of specific choices that you’ve made.

The Bible tells us that there’s nothing mysterious about the blessings and curses you experience in life. It’s the law of the harvest. You reap what you sow, and that’s a result of the choices that you’ve made. Whether it’s your health, your finances, or your relationships, they’re all the result of your choices, your lifestyle, and yet you see it time and time again where people create certain negative results for themselves and then blame God for making it happen. Solomon said it this way in Proverbs,

“A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3).

And so, we need to understand that technically it’s not God’s fault. We’re the accumulated results of choices that we’ve made and that’s why Moses warned us, because the road that you’ve chosen can only take you where that road leads. A northbound road will never take you west, it’ll never take you east, and some of you have been trying to get to a specific destination but you’ve taken the wrong road. For example, maybe you wanted happiness, but you’ve taken the road of selfishness to get there. Maybe you’re trying to get to a place of security, but you’ve taken the road of greed to get there. Or you’re looking for marital bliss, but you’ve taken the road of control and manipulation instead of loving servitude to get there. You see, the problem is that none of these roads will ever lead anywhere good. If you travel the road of selfishness, greed, control, or anger it’ll only take you to one dead end after another.

Whatever it is that you’re experiencing in your life today is the result of the path you’ve chosen to take. Wherever you arrive tomorrow will be determined by the choices you make today. Life is a series of accumulated results determined by the choices that you’ve made; which leads us to our third point, life is a series of individual days.

## 3. Individual Days

This is important to understand and so I want to bring one word in today’s text to your attention. One word that stands out as far more important than all the others and we find this word in verse 15. Moses says,

“I set before you today…” (Deuteronomy 30:15).

This day today matters more than any other. Yesterday’s gone, its history, the past is past, but today, “I set before you today”. Each day, each individual day, offers a myriad of opportunities, choices to prove yourself, decisions moving you toward a specific destination, and as long as you have breath the journey continues. You’ll never get to the point where you can say that you’ve arrived, but day after day, over and over and over again your choices will define who you are, what you’ll become, and where you’ll be tomorrow. It’s a daily choice.

After Moses went on to be with the Lord, Joshua took his place of leadership over the nation of Israel. He led the people of God into the promised land and it was there that he echoed the words of Moses saying,

“If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Today we need to understand that every day matters. God has set before you this day, today, and so I want to encourage you to look at the big picture. To recognize that your life is made up of thousands of individual choices breaking up each day like the strokes of a brush. And so, in order for the painting of your life to become the masterpiece God created it to be, each and every stroke of the brush must be taken seriously. We need to prayerfully and carefully consider our choices, choosing life, because it is better.

Now I know that there are some people who think that they’re outside of any possibility of being blessed by God because of their past. You know, they think that God could never blessed me financially because I’ve been so irresponsible. God can’t bless my marriage because I’ve been so selfishly cruel. God can’t use me because I’ve failed so many times, but that’s most certainly not true; it’s just your past choices that brought you to where you are today. As George Jones said, we’re all living or dying with the choices that we’ve made, but the good news is that if you’ve spent your life making the wrong choices, moving in the wrong direction, today you’re free to choose a new direction, a road that leads to the blessing of God. Moses stood up before the people of God and said,

“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…” (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).

This is the amazing thing about God’s grace. Our past doesn’t equal our future. Today you can choose better, you can choose to change the direction of your life. You see, you’ve got a higher calling, there’s something better ahead of you, something special, something different. I don’t know what it would be for you, but there’s something that you were called to do in this moment. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, you’ve made choices; you’re living the accumulated results of recurring choices that you’ve made day after day. But today, this day, you can choose better, you can walk out of the land of curses into the land of blessings. God has set before you today life and prosperity, choose life, because it’s just better. Let’s pray!

Pastor John Talcott

Christ's Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

July 22, 2018

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, Preaching Library, and PC Study Bible.*

*Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*