

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 12, 2014
1st Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Romans 10:12-21; John 1:36-51
Hymns: 5; 290; 775; 283 (250 for Gloria in Excelsis)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you —‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, the Savior of all the world, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Reflecting Christ's glory

Christmas decorations are pretty much all packed up, but the message of Christmas shouldn't be. Earlier this past week the tree was taken down at our house, and the decorations went back in the totes to be stored away until next year. But that gives occasion to recall the symbolism of those decorations one last time, and apply that lesson to our lives for the days and months ahead. The strings of lights on the tree symbolize the light of the glory of Christ that has shined in our hearts. That light still shines in our hearts with its joy and peace, even though the holiday is past. The colored glass balls symbolize how we are to reflect that light of Christ's glory in our lives. That is never to end as we make our way through the new year. The symbolism and the relevance of Christmas is something we need to take with us. It is that important to us; it is that important for the people we care about. So it is that the Lord even in days of old encouraged His people in –

**THEME: Sharing the Truth of Christ's Glory
with those You Love.**

The Lord made it clear that this is one of life's top priorities. It is –

I. A Message Our Loved Ones Need to Hear.

Consider how strongly our text encourages families to keep the Word of the Lord in their lives.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 “Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God

of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

As the people were about to enter the Promised Land life would become very different than it had been for the past forty years in which they had lived a nomadic life style. They would be taking possession of the land, and building their homes, and planting the crops and pursuing their trades. Life would be busy, and it would become very easy to get caught up in the ways of the people who lived around them and occupied the land before they entered Canaan. So the Lord encouraged them strongly to keep all His statutes and commandments, not only for themselves, but also for their children, and their children’s children! A zeal for the Word of the Lord needed to be handed down from generation to generation if they were to enjoy the full blessing of God in their new homeland.

But what about relevance for us today. The world has changed so much over the millennia. We live in a modern world. Some call it a post-modern world. We have such advanced technology. Science has discovered so much about life and medicine. All the old religious stuff is seen as being old fashioned and out of date. It doesn’t really apply so well to the way the world is today. At least that’s what we are told over and over again, until we actually begin to believe it.

But the world isn’t so different, not on the **spiritual** level. God is still in His heaven. He remains the Creator of all life, of all the universe. He still makes the rules. That goes with being God. It remains true today that God has revealed His holy will for our good and blessing. Indeed as much as ever it remains most important for our children and our children’s children that we raise them with a zeal for the Word of God and the blessings we find in God’s truth. Will we be mocked, ridiculed, and even persecuted for staying true to the old ways? Of course we will just as our fathers were before us. But that is the way of the world and the prince of this world. That doesn’t change the facts that observing the truth brings blessing into our lives and the lives of our children.

In our text the Lord referenced the many temporal blessings, including security and prosperity that would come to His people

Israel as long as they remained steadfast and true to the Lord. He wanted the Promised Land to remain “**a land flowing with milk and honey,**” a land that provided a rich and good life. The Lord desired to bring every blessing to His people.

That remains true for us today. Even though we live in a world corrupted by sin, and filled with sinful people, the Lord’s desire is to be good and gracious to all. He desires to bring blessings into the lives of His people. All that He has revealed to us is for our good and blessing. God isn’t fickle in His law, or self-serving. He laid out His law that we might be blessed as we live our lives to the praise of His glory.

What we will ultimately find by living in the Word and sharing God’s Word with those we love is --

II. A Message of Blessed Grace for our Lives.

Deuteronomy 6:3-5 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ 4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

God’s Word leads us to the Promised Land of heaven. It leads us there by providing God’s saving truth, that by His grace we know and believe in the one true God and serve Him in all our ways. But then we have the application of the law. The law shows us our sin. It leads us to despair of our own righteousness. Our sin is evident to us every day. The influence of the world is so pervasive, influencing our thoughts and our conduct, leading us to slip in our thoughts, leading us to accept sin that is so corrupt and yet increasingly a part of everyday life in the world. In the world evil is praised as good, and God’s truth is condemned as being evil. If we desire to see our children staying on the path that leads to heaven **we must not allow them to be ignorant of God’s law** and the guidance that it provides for us as we make our way through life in this world. It is so easy to go the other way. Jesus declared in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7: 13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

The Lord makes it clear that when we go along with the world in its thinking, its values, its way of life, it may indeed make this life easier, but it leads to destruction. The narrow gate may be a lot more difficult as we go against the flow of the world, and appear out of step with what so many in the world think is right. Indeed, one will be called hateful, ignorant, and bigoted. We have seen Christians ridiculed and condemned in the press in recent weeks for stating that sin remains sin, and that we all sin and need salvation. Indeed we may find ourselves out of step with the times in our society, but so it **has been** and so it **has to be**. Consider the word of the Lord delivered by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 6:16-17 Thus says the Lord: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ 17 Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not listen.’”

We live in a world that is just as resistant to the old paths, where good way is. So how shall we keep the faith against such opposition and hostility? Our text provides the answer.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-9 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

If we are to hand down the saving truth of God to our children we need to keep the truth of God as part of our daily life. We must not succumb to the pressures and enticements of the world. It is has got to be with us when we get up in the morning, when we go to work, at dinner time, when we play, and when we go to bed at night. Every day needs to begin and end with the Lord, because He

is good and His mercy endures forever. He comes to with His grace. Yes,

John 1:17 The law was given through Moses BUT grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Then we shall communicate this truth of God's glory with excitement. It is not all gloom and doom, or a strict set of regulations demanding the impossible and weighing us down. It the truth of God's love that is before us. God doesn't make rules just to make us miserable but because He loves us and desires life for us, the abundant life of eternity in heaven. So He promised us a Savior!

The Old Testament Scriptures were filled with the promise of life that God desired for His people. So when Jesus came into the world this was exciting news, the most exciting news that had ever been reported to men. It was something that had to be shared.

In our gospel lesson we see this excitement in **Andrew** who was pointed to Jesus by John the Baptist. As soon as Andrew realized that Jesus was the Christ, he had to find his brother **Simon**, whom we know as Peter. He had to tell Peter the wonderful good news that filled Andrew's heart with joy, the news of the glory of the coming of the Messiah. Andrew shared that excitement with the invitation "**Follow me.**" He wanted his brother to come and know the Lord.

Philip was with Andrew when they saw the Lord and Philip thought of his friend **Nathaniel**. He went and found Nathaniel, and assured Nathaniel that the One who fulfilled all the words of Moses' prophecies as well as the words of the prophets was now with them. Nathaniel was skeptical at first, but then Jesus revealed just a glimpse of His glory to Nathaniel, and he rejoiced and confessed the truth. Such is the power of the glory of Christ. It is an exciting truth we have to share and it is all there for us and for our children in God's Word.

Are we as faithful and devoted as we should be in all this? NO, There is room for us all to improve, and it is so important that we do. But even in this we have a Savior's love and grace.

CONCLUSION: **Jesus Fulfills All Righteousness.**

One of the significant events in Jesus' early life was when Jesus as a twelve year old child was taken to Jerusalem to observe the Passover with His family. When the sacred festival was over Jesus wasn't with the pilgrims traveling back to Nazareth. He had stayed back in Jerusalem, visiting with the Bible scholars in the temple. The love of the God's Word filled His heart and His life. Where we slip, forgetting the Word and how precious it ought to be to us every moment of our every day, **Jesus remained steadfast**. And so **all righteousness was fulfilled for us**. The glory of Jesus not only sets us an example, but shows us the righteousness which God credits to us through faith in His Son. So great is the glory of the Lord! Let us rejoice and share this saving truth with family and friends all our days!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.