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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 27, 2018
Trinity Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Romans 8:14-17; John 3:1-17
Hymns: 541; 245; 246; 377:10 (798:1-2)

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

Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You 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. ⁷You 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You 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, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Who's your favorite false God? --

I imagine that you are taken aback a bit at that question. I would hope that we all would adamantly deny that we serve any false god, favorite or not. But then as adamant as we might be I think we probably do have a favorite false god. It is so easy for us to fear or love or trust something or someone more than we do the Lord.

Moses was preparing the people of Israel for his departure. He had led the Children of Israel for forty years, forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The LORD, the one true God had delivered them from the Egyptians by whom they had been cruelly enslaved. The Egyptians had served many gods. They had a god for every occasion, and included the worship of the sun and the moon and the pharaoh.

Even after the LORD, the only true God had delivered Israel, the people had to be told to but away their false gods. It wasn't long after they had arrived at Sinai where Moses had ascended to the holy mountain to receive the law of the LORD that the people, frustrated by Moses' absence, demanded the Aaron make them a god. So Aaron molded that golden calf and told the people that this was the LORD who had delivered them from Egypt.

Forty years later the people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land. The land of Canaan was occupied by many different peoples and nations, and they each had their many gods. These horrible gods had already proven to be appealing to the people as they had fallen into idolatry and sexual sin with the people of Moab.

In his concern for the Children of Israel, Moses laid before the people the holy will of God once more, just as they had heard it at Sinai, urging them to serve the Lord.

But that was then and this is now. Modern day America doesn't have so many false gods as the ancient land of Canaan had that we would be tempted. Or does it? The philosophy of eastern mysticism with it false gods has been successfully woven into much of our society. Many Americans practice Yoga, or transcendental meditation without considering its Hindu origins, or that many instructors include the pagan philosophy within their lessons. One even sees here in Austin that some of the massage and alternative healing spas are quite blatant in presenting their Buddhist philosophy as part of their healing. People accept it without even realizing they are with tinkering in eastern mysticism.

Many Christian churches today confess that Jesus is but one of a number of different legitimate ways to come before God in peace and find salvation. If this is true than why would Christ have come down to earth, not to mention endure such sufferings and the curse of God? And yet this is the spirituality that is both socially acceptable in America today and considered politically correct. Never mind that it leads people to eternal death instead of life.

These are but examples of what we call “course” or “open” idolatry in our catechism lessons. It doesn’t necessarily bring us to the answer of the question with which I started, “what is your favorite false God?” I asked this of a young lady of Sunday school age and she was quite taken aback, but you see when I was her age my favorite false god was “fun with my friends.” Our family had devotion at the end of supper every evening, and I would see my friends playing outside. I wanted to be outside with them rather than sitting listening to Dad reading a devotion. My attitude towards the Word of the Lord was not good, indeed it was sinful. I loved “Fun with my friends” more than the Lord. Later that changed, or actually just morphed a little, when I was more concerned about what other people thought than loving the Lord. You see those are manifestations of what we call “secret” or “hidden” idolatry. Sometimes it is so hidden that we fail to recognize it within ourselves. Among the list of top candidates for your favorite false god you might find, money, ambition, leisure, sports, a loved one, a husband or wife or “significant other,” or whatever it might be that we fear, love, or trust more than the Lord.

On this Trinity Sunday it serves us all well to examine our hearts and to remember **“the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*”** (Psalm 100:3)

So then let’s turn to the opening of this second giving of the law by Moses and receive strength from the Holy Spirit of our God for –

**THEME: Serving the LORD, our Triune God
Every Moment of Every Day.**

We begin with a reminder of exactly who God is.

I. The LORD, the Triune God is One.

Our text begins with a statement that we might take for granted, but that is filled with great significance in knowing the LORD and serving Him as our God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

The name of God must grab our attention. In English we read LORD because that is how the rabbis in later Old Testament days read it in synagogue worship. They were so caught up in a false fulfillment of the law that for hundreds of years people stopped reading the name of God and used the Hebrew word for master or lord in its place. They did this for so many years that the actual pronunciation of the covenant name of God was lost. Moses presented God’s covenant name to the people to the people. We have expressed it as Jehovah, or Yahweh. This is the LORD, our covenant God, who promises us salvation that comes to us by His grace.

The LORD our God is one. Now this sounds like a simple statement to run up against the many gods of the heathen. But it is more than that. Almost without fail throughout the Old Testament when the Hebrew word for God is written in reference to the LORD our God, it is in the plural form. Hebrew has singular, dual, and plural forms, and the plural, used for three or more, is used for the LORD our God. From the beginning the believers comprehended the triune nature of God. This faith continues to be evident among us as we conclude our prayers in church; we pray in the name of Jesus, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is one God, now and forever.

The Triune God was present before the world began, all three persons were present and participating in creation, and are present today active in our salvation; and so Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shall always be. This is the LORD, the God of our salvation whom we are to serve with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength.

And so we are instructed by the Jesus Himself just how essential this knowledge of God is for us. In His High Priestly prayer on the night He was betrayed Jesus prayed:

John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

He is the only true God. He is the only way to eternal life and salvation. Jesus is the eternal Son. We know this to be true because --

II. The LORD is Revealed to Us in His Word.

The event that is before us in our text is not simply a repetition of the law, it is an exhortation to abide by the inspired Word of God. We would not know the LORD except that He made Himself known to us in His Word. In the first age of the earth this knowledge of God was transmitted by oral tradition from a father to his children. Moses was directed by the Holy Spirit to write down what had gone before for **our** instruction in righteousness. And so it was that the prophets and apostles and evangelists continued to write exactly and only what the Spirit of our God directed them to write that we might know our Savior God. It is only right that we should have the same high regard for all of the Holy Scripture that Moses laid upon the Children of Israel in his farewell address to them. They needed to keep the Word of the Lord before them, and keep His commandments. It was most important. He feared that they would let the truth of God's Word slip away, and so they would stray from the faith. Following the historical record laid out for us in the Old Testament we see how that happened, not just once, but again and again.

So a key element for our Trinity Sunday observance is to renew our dedication to the Word and how it brings us to the knowledge of God, the saving knowledge of God and His grace toward us. The Apostle Paul exhorts in --

Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Isn't that a beautiful description of congregational worship! And of course as we leave church we are to take it with us, and yes, that is why those hymns, those good solid hymns are so important for us. The psalms and hymns are taken home and sung in our minds and

hearts refreshing the gospel message that was heard in the sermon and liturgy. No, we are not about dead orthodoxy just because we don't present a free flowing entertainment motif for worship.

Wholesome worship is centered in coming before the Lord and humbling ourselves before Him, and seeking His love and forgiveness, and receiving the assurance of that love and forgiveness. Wholesome worship is about seeking wisdom from above that comes to us through the Word of God. Our worship is about holding onto the truth of a crucified Savior who gave Himself for us, and a Heavenly Father who declared us righteous for Jesus' sake, and a Holy Spirit who called us by that gospel to true faith. As we stay in Scriptures we shall find the wonderful works of God for us and for our salvation, again, and again, and again.

With that we are ready to serve the Lord with gladness; and it is not oppressive for us to hear that --

III. The LORD Commands Complete Devotion.

What we have in our text is the opening of the Ten Commandments. It is really the full presentation of the expectation of the first commandment. Listen again.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You 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. ⁷You 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Without faith in the righteousness of Jesus these words would be horrifying; we would have no hope of salvation. As believing children of God these words open our understanding to the right and proper place of the LORD and His Word in our lives. We serve the LORD with complete devotion of heart, mind, and strength by staying faithful to His Word. You don't pick and choose what fits in your life at any particular time. This is the Word of **God**. Accept

it as such and treasure it. Treasure it in your heart so much that this is the one thing above all else that you desire to pass on to your children. Do this by talking about the Lord with your children, by reading them Bible stories, by helping them memorize Bible passages and hymns, by praying with them every night at bedtime. Then these words will be precious to them also, and all the more precious to you as well.

When we make our way through life what is in front of our eyes, constantly in front of our eyes but the values and tradition of the world. We are encouraged by Paul not to be like the world when he writes:

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

We need to hold the Word before our eyes, remember the will of God, and not cave in to the influence of this world and be like the world. We need to show the world how good and wonderful and perfect and loving the will of God is for us all.

So let us never ask again, “Who is your favorite false god?” but only, “Who is your God?” May our answer always be the LORD the Triune God. He is our God! The LORD, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the LORD He is One! The LORD He is the God our salvation!
AMEN.

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