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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 4, 2019
8th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Colossians 1:1-14, Luke 10:25-37
Hymns: 5; 297; 285; 283; (248:1-3)

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

Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 30:9-14

⁹The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, *and* if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹¹“For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off. ¹²*It is* not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

¹³*Nor is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. (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: Living the good life. --

Is that what life is all about? Is that what God is promising here? Living the good life? What exactly does that mean anyway, "Living the good life?" For me it conjures up pictures of wealth and affluence and ease. The good life is to own a nice big house, drive a new car, have a cabin on the lake with a ski boat, or a fine fishing boat, vacation in exotic places; maybe even own a vacation house in the Caribbean. Now that's the good life! Everyone assumes that this is what life is about, this is what we are to chase after in life. It is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that the Lord has given us so much more than that. We need to open our eyes to see is that -

THEME: We Are Living a Blessed Life.

Yes, it begins with the fact that we are --

I. Blessed with God's Gracious Providence.

Deuteronomy 30:9 "The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers."

These are the words of Moses from his farewell address to the children of Israel. Moses was not going to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Moses wanted the people to understand that they were blessed, and that they would be blessed. The Lord was going to bless their labors as they went forward in faith into Canaan and took possession of the land, and planted and harvested and built their homes. The Lord was going to bless all this labor not because these people were so faithful, but because the Lord delighted in them. That simply means that the Lord was gracious and would bless them. He would bless them bountifully even as the Lord had blessed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob centuries earlier. It was all a

matter of grace. The Lord would make sure that when they worked they would indeed prosper as the Lord blessed them.

We also live under the Lord's blessing. Today, in the twenty-first century after Christ, the Lord sees Christ believers as His people, and He delights in us. The Lord prospers the work of our hands. He desires only our good and blessing. Yes, life in this world has its many trials and tribulations. However we are not receiving retribution from the Lord, but correction. We read in Proverbs: ¹¹ My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; ¹² For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights." (Proverbs 3:11-12)

The Lord delights in us because of His grace in Christ Jesus. He delights in us and blesses us for Jesus' sake.

So don't be misled by prosperity preachers, or positive mental attitude prophets who would put the cart before the horse and encourage us to earn God's favor by sending the TV evangelist a check. First the Lord delights in us according to His grace. It is because of His grace and favor that we have been called to faith, called to be His children. In a world that is full of so many false gods and so much vanity let us realize that we are --

II. Blessed to Know the Only True God as He Revealed Himself to Us in His Word.

Deuteronomy 30:10 if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, *and* if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

"If you obey" makes it sound like we have a choice, and if we make the right choice we will be rewarded. Well the choice of natural man is to turn away from the Lord. The

natural man doesn't know who the true God is. Natural man gropes around in spiritual darkness and cannot find God, much less obey His voice. So how is it that we have come to know the only true God and Jesus whom He sent to save us? God in His grace has revealed Himself to us in His Word. Here in our text Moses refers to the things written in the "Book of the Law." This is not just the Ten Commandments, or other moral restraints that were written in a legal code that we might behave ourselves. God revealed His plan for salvation to the children of Israel as He delivered them from the Egyptians, and instituted the Passover, and then the Sabbath observance reminding the Children of Israel of the rest that is to be found in the Lord. And then the Day of Atonement in which the scapegoat and the sacrificial goat relieve the people of their sins and the guilt and condemnation of their sins by pointing forward to the Promised Messiah who was to come and truly take their sins away. This is the revelation of the Lord in His grace and peace that was presented to the Children of Israel in their daily sacrifices, and in the reading of the Torah, the five books of Moses, which our text calls the Book of the Law. Later the words of the prophets who were yet to come would add wondrous details to the marvels of salvation that were to come in Jesus. And so the Children of Israel had the one true God come to them and delight in them, and reveal Himself to them so that they might know Him as their God and they would be His people. Now that was something for them to cling to with all their heart and with all their soul.

But what happened was that the Children of Israel ran after the gods of the nations. Every couple of generations they would slip back into heathen practices, and turn away from God in favor of the lust of the flesh. Time and time again the Lord would send His prophets to call them to repentance, and finally place them under the power of oppressive nations until they turned to the Lord, crying for deliverance.

Now we live in the age of fulfillment. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and perfectly fulfilled the law for us, securing righteousness. Jesus took the curse of the law upon Himself, and paid for the sins of the whole world as He suffered on the cross, and died and was buried. Jesus rose the third day to show us the truth of resurrection and to grant us the hope of everlasting life. We have before us the revelation of God's plan of salvation complete and in place. Now think of that phrase again, "If you obey." What does it mean to obey the gospel but that we put our faith and confidence of salvation in Christ Jesus alone, and that we hold to that gospel truth with all our heart and with all our soul.

And still it seems that every couple of generations people tire of this marvelous gospel, and chase after the pleasures of the world. They seek the good life rather than that blessed life that we have given to us by the grace of God as it is revealed to us in His Word.

We have got to break this pattern. We need to turn to the Lord. But how? How is this done? It seems so far from us. Well, it isn't. We have what we need to find our way. We are --

III. Blessed with Guidance for Life in the Plain Truth of God's Word.

Hear the words of Moses:

Deuteronomy 30:12-14 "For this commandment which I command you today *is not too* mysterious for you, nor *is it* far off. ¹² *It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'* ¹³ *Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'* ¹⁴ *But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

Sometimes people assert that it is just too difficult to figure out what the truth is. Others might say that no one church should claim a monopoly on the truth. More and more churches have abandoned the Word of God as the source of truth. They say it has become clear that the Bible is not inerrant, and that it is not clear. Then what? How can we know what is right? In America today it comes down to political correctness, and opinion polls. So then truth is no more than what one might imagine the truth to be. Truth is whatever is convenient for the moment. People are befuddled!

Are you befuddled? Of course not. What Moses said so many centuries ago is even more true today. No one has to go to heaven in search of the truth. You don't have to cross the oceans hoping to find truth. The truth is not only near, and I mean right in front of your face as you hold the Scriptures, it is already within your heart and on your lips. What do I mean, you ask? Well listen to how the Apostle Paul related this very same Scripture to the Christians in Rome:

Romans 10:6-10 “But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “ ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*)⁷ or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

There is no greater mystery than this; Christ Jesus came into this world as the full demonstration of God's love and grace for a fallen mankind. The truth that we know from the Scriptures concerning Jesus is the truth that secures our righteousness, the righteousness of Christ that is

credited to us by grace through faith. This is the truth that the Holy Spirit has implanted in your hearts. This is the truth that has crossed your lips, even this morning as we confessed our faith in the Triune God. You see the truth is not so far away that you can't know how to live. It is right there in your heart. You live that love with which Jesus also has loved you. You live to serve Him who gave Himself for us. You honor His name by saying "no" to sin, by serving your neighbor, by sharing your faith, by praising the Lord and hearing His Word faithfully. Even as Jesus is the Word made flesh, so Jesus has taken hold of our hearts and our lives, and if we do get befuddled by the world, don't be dismayed. We have the clear and simple truth of the Word of God in our hands to keep us in His grace and guide us on our way to heaven.

What the psalmist wrote so long ago still stands true,
"Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."
(Psalm 119:105)

We are living the blessed life. The Lord our Savior God has called us to be His own special people. The Lord, for Jesus' sake, in the greatness of His grace and love, delights in us. The Lord has revealed Himself to us in love, and He has implanted that faith, that love, that hope, that truth of His Word in our hearts that we might walk in His ways, that we might turn to the Lord with **all** our hearts and with **all** our souls. **We live the blessed life of the child of God!**

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans 15:13)