

Sermon: A decision of importance

We live in an era of seemingly unlimited choices. This means we are confronted with so many decisions. Perhaps too many.

There is such a thing as decision fatigue as we are bombarded with having to make a multitude of decisions daily. This might explain why I start each day with doing the exact same thing, brush my teeth, take a shower, take my pills, make a coffee and start my day. Those are a few less decisions on my plate that I must organize for the day.

The other, and greater, problem, is that with all the decisions we make in a day, a week, a year, a lifetime, the most important decision we face gets lost.

What is that decision? Let us go to our reading from Deuteronomy today for a hint.

The Book of Deuteronomy captures what Moses said to God's people as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. This was an important new beginning for the people who had spent the last forty years in the wilderness following their rescue from slavery in Egypt. As they stood at the edge of the Promised Land, Moses called the people to make a decision.

"Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster."

While it sounds like the people are to choose between life and good, or death and bad, that is not the real decision that is to be made. Those are the consequences of the decision that must be made.

The decision to be made is whether to be in a relationship of love with God, or not.

God had already called these people into a special relationship through the call of Abraham. God brought them out of slavery in Egypt and provided for them in the wilderness. God gave them the law and made promises about the future.

In other words, the people were called to decide whether to be in a relationship of love with the God who had already decided to be in a relationship of love with them. God had already made his choice. He chose these people, Israel, to be a special people through whom he would work out his purposes for the world. Now it was their turn to commit to the relationship.

There were consequences to their decision. It was as if God was saying "I choose you, we can do this life together, or you can be on your own. Of course, being on your own will not go well, for there are big bad nations out there who will want your land for resources and security, and your people as slaves. But if you want to do life with me, I will be with you, and protect you."

Today, God offers to be in a relationship of love with each one of us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We each face a decision on whether to be in that love relationship that God offers. God has already made his choice, and that choice was made clear at the cross. God chose that relationship with us.

So, we need to answer the question, do we choose to be in that love relationship with God or don't we?

There are consequences to what we choose as well. God will either be in our future, or not. That is our decision to make. Has a lifetime of decision-making pushed this, the biggest decision of our lives, onto the backburner?

This one big decision, to be in this kind of relationship with God, will be reflected in every little decision we make throughout our life.

The call to love God was accompanied with a call to follow God's ways: "love the Lord your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways".

This would affect all of life's decisions. God's people could not be in a love relationship with God and live like the Egyptians, or the Assyrians, or the Canaanites, or anyone else. Choosing to be in a love relationship with God meant being different, marching to the beat of a different drum.

Some may think of God's law negatively, and that it was all about control. It was, however, about becoming a better people and a more just society.

Through the law, God's people had the opportunity to be freed from foolish and evil practices, from the injustices that plague unjust societies.

Reading the Old Testament prophets, the concept of justice comes up often. They often mention how the Israelites failed to follow God's ways, failing to take care of the most vulnerable of their society.

Through following God's ways, the people would be salt and light in a tasteless and dark world. In choosing to be in a love relationship with God, and in allowing that one decision to shape all their decisions, God's people would be taking steps toward the Kingdom of God.

Today, a love relationship with God will be reflected in every single choice we make.

Spirituality is not something we fit into a time slot each day. Spirituality is at the centre of our being, affecting every decision we will make.

Let's not assume that the way we allow our decision to be in this relationship with God we shape all our decisions by listing every rule we find in the Bible. We are not old covenant people, so to blindly apply every rule we find in Deuteronomy would be to miss the moment that we live in, the love relationship with God that we are offered.

We are new covenant people, with a focus on Jesus, his teaching and example. Through following Jesus, we take steps toward the Kingdom of God.

The Christian walk is more about heart work than keeping a set of rules. Developing character is hard work and takes a lifetime. It also takes God's Spirit.

To choose a love relationship with God is to choose God every time over everything else that would want our allegiance and faithfulness.

Moses warns them, that if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.

When we read the Old Testament prophets, we discover that God's people were often likened to a faithless family. Sometimes they did worship other gods, which meant that sometimes they did live according to the lifestyles and standards of other nations.

The God who led the people out of Egypt did not. God offered them a love relationship, but God must be their only God.

Today, there are many gods looking for our allegiance.

Money can accomplish great things. However, the love of money can turn it into a god, the worship of which affects so many other decisions.

Similar things can be said of power, image, fame, family, celebrity, alcohol, influence, politics and so much more. These things and more can become like gods to us, negatively impacting our capacity to make godly and wise decisions. For a society that has largely rejected God and the supernatural, we sure do have many gods.

In conclusion, we live in an era of seemingly unlimited choices, we are therefore confronted with so many decisions.

There is one decision we face that is greater than any other. It is making a choice that is more important than choosing vocation, location, or even marriage partner: That decision is "what are we going to do with God's offer of a relationship of love"?

If we choose to be in that kind of a relationship with God, all our decisions will be shaped by that one decision. If we choose to be in a love relationship with God, we will make the effort to identify and cease the worship of any gods that may be affecting our decisions.

We need to remember and certainly be aware every day of our lives, that God has already made his choice. Have you? Amen