

September 5, 2004
Pentecost 14C

Choices.

We all face them everyday.

Some are fairly easy...

like whether to go for the French Roast
coffee in the morning or the Columbian.

Others are much more difficult...

which job to take...
to have the surgery or not...
to take that elderly, unconscious
relative off life support or not.

We worry,

we pray,
we even try to
avoid some decisions.

Some decisions only have short term consequences...

others have eternal
consequences.

Moses had led the Jewish people out of bondage in Egypt and
said he would lead them to new land,
that would be theirs forever.

Now they had been wandering through the desert looking for this land for 40 years....

How did they know where to go?

God led them with a cloud by day and with a pillar of fire at night.

God had much he wanted to teach the Jewish people before he gave them the land he promised to them.

With Moses leading them,

in the desert God taught them faith...
how to trust God for everything.

And this was not a small group.

There were thousands of people here that
had to have food and water.

Where would they find it in the desert?

God showed them that he would provide...

He provided manna everyday as food and
when Moses struck a rock with his
staff...water poured forth.

If you saw something like that happening everyday wouldn't you trust in God?

But during those forty years the people sometimes followed and trusted God,
but often complained, resisted, rebelled.

It was not an easy 40 years.

But now they were nearing the end of their journey.

Many had died along the way since leaving Egypt...
many others were born on the journey and
did not remember Egypt.

But over forty years God had been shaping them to be his people...
and now the promised land was near.

But before they entered the land God told them that they have a choice now set before them....
a choice with eternal consequences.

He said...

*See, I set before you today...
life and prosperity,
death and destruction.*

Here they were...having walked through the desert for 40 years to get to this place...

They are excited with anticipation...

And God says they have a choice to
make as they enter the land.

And he tells them the choice is life and death.

Life and prosperity on one hand...
and death and destruction on the other.

Seems like the choice should be a
no-brainer, doesn't it?

And God went on to explain...

*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.*

Obey my commands and receive my blessing...

Turn away and worship other gods...

and you will be destroyed and will not
live long in this land.

God knew how his people were...

How they over and over again are enticed
to but their faith in other gods...
gods who seem on the surface to be
able to give them whatever they
want at the moment.

When famine would hit the land and the crops were failing...
instead of trusting God, they would often
turn to pagan fertility gods for help.

He knew their weaknesses.

So God warned them of the
consequences of turning against him
again.

And God went on to say to them...

*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.*

You have a choice....so CHOOSE LIFE!

We know the history and in fact the Jewish people did *not* choose life but again and again turned on the Lord.

And as a result the Blessings God promised to them were taken and are now given to those who follow Jesus
Christ.

To LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD;
LISTEN TO HIS VOICE and
HOLD FAST TO HIM.

THAT is life!!

It is not different for us.

Don't we often look in other places for life?

Don't we turn to other gods looking for the blessing of a happy life?

We assume that if we just had more money, more free time, more of something...

we would be happy.

We look everywhere for happiness except to the God who is the source of all blessings.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD;
LISTEN TO HIS VOICE and
HOLD FAST TO HIM.

Love the Lord your God by making *his will* the priority of your life.

Listen to his voice in prayer and regularly reading and studying his word.

And hold fast to him.

It's an interesting word used here. The best English translation is to LASH...

To be LASHED to Christ,
Being lashed is what sailors did as they crossed the Mediterranean or Sea of Galilee.

As huge storms would come up suddenly, and these small boats would rock violently.

The soldiers would lash themselves to the mast of the ship.
They physically tied themselves to the
pole used to hold the sails.

That's the way they kept from being thrown overboard.

That's what God was saying to the Jewish people on that day before they entered the promised land...
And it is what he is saying to us.

When the storms of life come up...
When life starts to rock and we feel our
security slipping out from under us...
LASH YOURSELF TO CHRIST.

THAT'S how we keep from being drowned under the stresses and strains of life.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD;
LISTEN TO HIS VOICE and
HOLD FAST TO HIM.

And THAT is life...
Anything else...is death.

Amen.