

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Behind Door Number One...”

Based on Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Many years ago on a late October morning, while my husband was sipping his coffee, there was a knock at the door. A neighbor stood impatiently waiting, as John opened the door. The wind swept in, in a great gust, and the sleet stung his face. Almost frantically the neighbor said,

“Your leaves are falling on my lawn!”

Now how do you respond to that? What an absurd notion that on a stormy day in the late fall with the wind whipping this way and that, and the rain pinging on the windows, that someone should be so concerned with leaves, or perhaps more precisely, my leaves, and where they were blowing. Because there were leaves blowing everywhere, along with twigs, gum wrappers missed from last week's garbage pickup and someone's ball cap obviously not held down tight enough. As the saying goes, “The devil is in the details!”

The Book of Deuteronomy is often seen as the ‘rule book’ of the Old Testament. While

Moses may have led the people out of Egypt in dramatic style, and secured the Ten Commandment in the Book of Exodus, it is in Deuteronomy that you get a glimpse of the Chosen People preparing to enter the Promised Land, and considering carefully, what kind of people they are going to be, what kind of society they are going to be, once the nomadic journey through the desert has come to an end.

“SEE, I SET
BEFORE YOU
TODAY LIFE
AND
PROSPERITY”
~DEUTERONOMY
30:15

Because life on the road had not been easy. A mere three chapters after Moses and the Israelites watch the Egyptian army swallowed up by the Red Sea and sang their victory song (Exodus 15), the line-up of complaints was so long that Moses was advised to gather a team together to handle many of the day-to-day squabbles, issues and arguments (Exodus 18):

“I don't like the menu!”
“I forgot to bring my hiking boots.”
“Ester's tent is bigger than my tent!”
“My camel is too tall.”
“It's hot outside!”

You know, really important, life changing problems for a man leading thousands of people and even more animals, children, goats, and sheep through a hot desert without a map. As I said, the devil is in the details.

Years later, as the journey neared its end, the Jordan River was in view, and the Promised Land rested on the horizon, Moses recognized that the crossing of this river would represent an important opportunity for his people: new land to settle, new families to raise, a chance, or perhaps more precisely, a choice: to leave the past behind:

- past hurts,
- past grumblings
- past problems
- past divisions

It was an opportunity to choose a new path to new life.

“Behind door number one,” Moses began,

“I set before you,, life and prosperity...love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to

him, 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.” (v15-16).

“Behind door number two,” Moses continued,
“Death and destruction...you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.” (v18)

“The choice is yours,” said Moses. “You can keep doing things the way they have been, or, you can *“choose life”* (v19).

Today I speak to you of love. Not romantic Hollywood love. Not a radical love of diversity and inclusivity.

I speak of a cosmic kind of love, similar to John’s Gospel when he spoke of Christ:

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. (John 1:10)

I speak of a love for humanity, of the earth, a love for all that is good. If the devil is in the details, then our world is certainly caught up in it: corporate greed, civil unrest, poverty, famine, disease, misuse of resources, and a falling away from the unspoken desire for kindness, sharing, generosity and compassion. We think this is new, but it is not. Moses himself saw the pitfalls of society that spent too much time dwelling on itself, rather

than looking up and breathing deeply of the rich bounty of God.

Our devilish details have changed since Moses’ time, but our human condition has not. And more recently, the more we pray and rail against the unfairness of the world, the more unfair it seems to become.

- Have we failed?
- Are we not faithful enough?
- Have we chosen the wrong door?

Perhaps, it is that we ourselves, have become caught in those devilish details, and have forgotten the Promise behind door number one.

For to rest in “Godly love” requires us to let go of the details, and drink deeply of God. It requires us to trust that God is at work in a world that seems chaotic. It requires us not to demand answers from our Creator, but to serve diligently, constantly and without question.

- Could we really trust our God enough, to believe that if we stepped back from trying to juggle all the details, that He could wash over us and through us to bring about more peace, more harmony?
- Could we really keep our fingers from stirring the pot and let the whispers of God surprise us?
- Could we discipline ourselves to steer clear of

devilish details, stay focused on Godly love and serving that love?

Many would call this notion naïve. And I’m not suggesting that we all sell off our worldly goods and go live in a cave, or stop volunteering and serving the community as many of you do. But it is to make the bold statement, that what we are doing, does not seem to be working for our world. And Moses warned us that a life lived in the devilish details behind door number two does not end well. So let’s choose something different.

It’s a choice.

It’s choosing to love, for love’s sake.

It’s choosing to trust God’s lead.

It’s choosing to believe that God’s love can change the world.

It’s choosing, door number one.

“The choice is yours,” said Moses.

Which door will you choose?