January 31

Happy Monday, everyone!

This week we will look at the fifth book of the Bible, Deuteronomy. (As a side note, the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy – are collectively called “The Pentateuch.” In the Jewish tradition, they are also collectively referred to as “The Torah,” which means “The Law” or “The Instruction.”)

In any case, the word “Deuteronomy” is derived from the Hebrew Devarim, which means “the words,” and in this case, the words of Moses. This title is fitting because the book is comprised of three addresses given by Moses to the Israelites as they are about to enter the Promised Land (though God prevented Moses himself from entering the Promised Land as a consequence of Moses’ disobedience.) There are a number of themes that are presented throughout, and the first that I would like to briefly explore is the sufficiency of God’s Word.

God had given the Israelites detailed instructions on how to live, how to govern themselves, and how to worship. In His grace, God told them (and tells us today), exactly what He expects. This is what the Lord states through Moses in his first address to the Israelites:

“Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you” (4:1-2).

I have purposely highlighted the sentence starting with “Do not add to what I command you…” God’s commands and His Word are perfect and complete as is. We are neither to add nor subtract from the. (Incidentally, this is where the Pharisees got in trouble and why Jesus so consistently called them out. They added their own rules and regulations to the law, while ignoring other sections of it.)

That being said, I think sometimes we make the teachings of Scripture complicated and confusing and forget how wonderfully beautiful and simple God’s commands are: Love me with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul. Love your neighbors; not just some of them, but all of them. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. House the homeless. Care for the widows, the orphans, the aliens, and the refugees. Perhaps most importantly, understand that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

My prayer for you today is this: that you abide in the knowledge that God has graciously revealed Himself to you personally through His Word, the Word that is perfect, complete, and sufficient.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
February 1

Happy February, everyone!

Continuing today with a brief look at the book of Deuteronomy, today I would like to explore the theme of history.

As we have discussed before, Scripture is most meaningful when read and understood in context. Additionally, the history of the Jewish people is also our history as the people of God. In fact, God repeatedly reminded the Israelites of their history and of His promises and work in the formation of their nation. This history was interwoven with the need for obedience to God’s commands and decrees. Consider this:

“In the future, when your son asks you, ‘What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?’ tell him: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors’” (6:20-23).

Before my father-in-law Clarence passed away in January of 2019 at the age of 100, he loved to talk to me about “the old days.” He was a lifelong farmer, and he would talk about the price of corn from fifty years ago, the kinds of tractors he owned, what life was like during “the war,” and so on. Some may have found it tedious, but I always felt honored that he would share his past with me, because after all, his story was also my wife Judy’s story and, by extension, became part of my story as well.

In Deuteronomy, the Lord reminds the Israelites about their bondage in Israel and His deliverance of them thirty-eight times. As a matter of fact, this history was so important that after the death and resurrection of Jesus, when the disciple Stephen was on trial before the Jewish court, he gives a lengthy speech recounting this history. This is part of it:

“This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness” (Acts 7:35-36).

So, the story of the Israelites’ redemption from slavery is our story as well. That story would come to fruition when we were freed not from the slavery of Pharaoh, but from the slavery of sin. And not by the parting of the Red Sea, but by the death on a Roman cross of God’s own Son. That’s our story, one that is written by the hand of God on your heart, and on mine.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 2

Grace and peace to you this day.

A third theme I would like to explore today from the book of Deuteronomy is God’s love for His people. Before I do so, consider this:

Those of us who are parents, can you recall times when you had to repeat the rules of the house over and over to your children? If you don’t have children, can you remember your parents doing so to you? I think most of us can identify with this in one way or another. I remember when I was a young boy, when my mother found herself repeating herself, she would say, “don’t make me chew my cabbage twice.” My brothers and I used to laugh at that which, trust me, only made matters worse.

In any case, for most of us, we do so because we care about our kids, as our parents cared about us. It may have seemed tedious and maybe even heavy-handed at the time, but this was done out of love and concern for our well-being. And so it is with the Lord.

Shortly after leaving Egypt, the Lord gave the Israelites what we know as the Ten Commandments. However, those tablets were smashed by Moses when he saw the Israelites worshiping the golden calf (you can read about it in Exodus 32). However, out of God’s love, before the Israelites enter the Promised Land, He takes the time to reissue them, if you will. This is what Moses says:

“Moses summoned all Israel and said: ‘Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our ancestors that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The Lord spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. (At that time, I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the word of the Lord, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me’” (5:1-6).

This is followed by the other nine Commandments.

Why does God give these again? Because He loves His people. They are His “treasured possession” (14:2). He cares for them and their well-being. He wants them to succeed.

Have you ever thought of yourself as the treasured possession of the Creator of the universe? Have you ever thought that He wants nothing more than to care for you? Have you ever thought about the depths of His love for you? If you haven’t, I have some news for you. In fact, it’s the Good News: God so loves you, every one of you reading this, that He gave His only Son for you, so that if you believe in Him, you shall not perish but have eternal life. That’s how much He loves you, His treasured possession.
Greetings, DGCC Family,

The fourth and final theme that I would like to explore today is **God’s promise to His people**.

Let me start with this: as humans, we are bound by time and space. As I write this, it is 3:40 p.m. on Saturday, January 29, 2022. I know that because of the clock and calendar in the bottom right corner of my computer, the clock and calendar on my iPhone which is sitting on my desk next to me in my office, the pocket watch that my daughter Jillian gave me, which I have on display on my desk, and my Cozi family calendar, which is an app that all of us Burys have on our mobile devices and that I just checked to make a lunch appointment for the coming week. We are acutely bound by time and space.

Not so with God. Not only is He timeless and eternal, so is His promise to His people. In his third and final address to the Israelites, Moses says this on behalf of the Lord:

“You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today” (29:12-15).

God is making a solemn oath to the people present that day, “and to those who [were not there that day].” That means, as He made the promise with the Israelites that day, so does He make the same promise to us today. And that promise is this: obey Him “so that He may be your God.” God’s nature is eternal, and therefore so is His promise to His people. The God of all Creation, of billions of stars and planets, of the heights of the mountains and depths of the oceans, makes an eternal promise to us almost 3,500 years ago that is as true then as it is today.

And, nowhere in all eternity was that promise more graciously, and lovingly, and mercifully displayed than on a hill called Calvary, held in place and made so very true by three Roman nails hammered through the flesh of God’s precious Son. God’s eternal promise, made to you, and to me.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
February 4

Happy Friday, everyone!

Here’s your musical devotional for today. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtlI3mNj5U

IHS,

Pastor Lou