

Pentecost 3, 2008  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Deuteronomy 11: 26 – 28

From the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 11. Moses said, Look. I'm giving you a choice. There's a blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God. There's a curse if you don't.

The word of God. And we pray:  
Heavenly Father you have called us by name, and we are yours. Forgive us when we go astray, and in your mercy bring us always back to yourself. Lead us along right pathways through this world of time, and on the last day grant us a place in your heavenly Kingdom, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Let's say you want to take a vacation; and let's say wonder of wonders, you and your family have been given, free of charge, a two week stay at the Magic Kingdom in Florida. Free! Your family! Two weeks, Magic Kingdom!—all you have to do is get yourself down there. And that of course, is where the trouble starts. Getting to the Magic Kingdom, well first of all you have to pack for the trip, but there's this big family argument about who gets to take what and, you end up with nine beach towels but no one remembered any sun screen. Furthermore, everyone knows you'll be driving the van to get there, but no one bothers to gas it up, certainly no one bothers to have the engine checked before you go, so you're no more than 20 miles down the road when you have to stop for gas and a couple quarts of motor oil. You're no more than 30 miles down the road before the bickering starts, and the yelling, and the poking, and great lines like "If you two don't stop that this minute I'm turning this van around and we're going back home!"—those lines start showing up before you even get to Toledo. Did I say, Toledo? Florida is south, and Toledo is, well, it's south of *something* but, the fact is, you have a map in the van. You do. But no one bothers to look at it very closely, and before you know it, your wonderful trip to the Magic Kingdom in Florida has taken a detour to downtown Cleveland. So now what.

Well, at this point, you family could just look at each other, laugh, group hug, group hug, oh it's my fault for forgetting the sun screen no no no I should have been more careful about the map—downtown Cleveland is a good chance for repentance and renewal, you know. It's also a very good chance for the blame game—you did this well you did that, it's your fault no it's yours; I

know, it's God's fault. Good quick way to end the argument, blame it on God, it's God's fault, He's punishing us for some reason. He's being unfair to us, why o why is God picking on us!

Now let me pause for a moment to say, in this world of time, many many things happen that certainly are unfair, as we humans measure fairness. Earthquakes and typhoons, hurricanes and tornadoes; cancers, and accidents, the list is endless. It's hard to see a rhyme or reason to any more of it, I know. That is an important topic. But for another day; because you see many many more things happen, for reasons that are only too obvious. Most of life; most of life God plainly is not picking on us, most of life God just gives us the rope and then stands back, to see how long it's gonna take for us to hang ourselves. Most of life, in other words, we manage to bring it on ourselves. We bicker, we argue, we think only about #1 here. We have a road map in the Bible, but scarcely have any idea what it says, then wonder why we get lost. We are careless, selfish, self-absorbed, we are sinners. And the choices we sinners make in life have consequences, consequences created, mostly by ourselves.

And that I take that to be the basic point Moses is making here in Deuteronomy 11. You've got a choice to make in life folks, and though no one is saying it's easy, it's not all together complicated either. You've got a choice, to follow Almighty God through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ; or not. To be kind, to be selfish; to forgive, to carry a grudge. To clean up your act and break your bad habits, to keep making the same old mistakes and living with the same old results. To strike out on your own, to read the book and follow the directions, to depend on yourself. To depend on God; to lean on Christ for strength and wisdom and patience and direction, and everything else that is needful.

The blessings and curses of Deuteronomy, in other words, are no mystery. It's just how life works, and we should know that by now. There's no mystery to it!

But there is mystery in the cross of Jesus Christ, there is wonder and mystery and awe, in the height and depth of His love for us. Back to you and your family, stuck in a van in downtown Cleveland. What if you're not stuck. What if the same kind individual who gave you two weeks

at the Magic Kingdom, came looking for you every time you got lost; what if He calmed your nerves and paid your traffic ticket and reconciled your family and got you back on the road, heading the right way this time. What if you never got so lost that He couldn't find you, what if the self-inflicted curses were never so great, that His blessing couldn't find a way through. What if in short it wasn't some Magic Kingdom in Florida, but the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, what if the God who promised you a place in heaven. Came looking for you every time you got yourself lost. There is no mystery anymore in how I manage to get lost. Really, it's no mystery to me. There is mystery in the love of God in Jesus Christ who died and rose again, the one who comes and finds me every single time, and who has promised me the destination; no matter how many wrong turns there may be along the way.

You too. May this be the day you know yourself to be found by God, and may this be the moment you see His path unfolding before you, with His Kingdom waiting at the end. In the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.