**Stewardship Sunday: Christ’s Love, Our Calling: Love Speaks with Urgency**

**September 15, 2013 – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Deuteronomy 10:12-22 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“What does the LORD your God ask of you?”**

*12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you* *but to fear* *the LORD your God, to walk* *in all his ways, to love him,* *to serve the LORD* *your God with all your heart* *and with all your soul,* *13 and to observe the LORD's commands* *and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?* *14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens,* *even the highest heavens,* *the earth and everything in it.* *15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved* *them, and he chose you,* *their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today.* *16 Circumcise* *your hearts,* *therefore, and do not be stiff-necked* *any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods* *and Lord of lords,* *the great God, mighty and awesome,* *who shows no partiality* *and accepts no bribes.* *18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow,* *and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.* *19 And you are to love* *those who are aliens,* *for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.* *20 Fear the LORD your God and serve him.* *Hold fast* *to him and take your oaths in his name.* *21 He is your praise;* *he is your God, who performed for you those great* *and awesome wonders* *you saw with your own eyes. 22 Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all,* *and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.*

What does the LORD your God ask of you… when you are faced with a major life change – marriage, having a baby, death of a parent, friend, deployment, a major move? What does the LORD your God ask of you… when you are faced with a difficult situation in life, can’t seem to handle it any longer, - what does the LORD your God ask of you? When recall where you were 12 years ago September 11th - as you recall those events, what does the LORD your God ask of you?

Society is telling us to “Never forget.” Never forget the events that took place in New York and at the Pentagon, in that Pennsylvanian field. Why should we never forget? Why should we look back and reflect when there is so much pain and sorrow, suffering, death, and fear? So that we can teach our children that this is what we had to live through, and to remember that there are people still hurting, and it is a reminder for us to pray for them, to pray for our nation, to teach our children to pray for the brave men and women who continue to defend her, and to pray that God graciously keep his almighty wings over us. And perhaps most importantly, to teach them, “How did I handle that situation? And how will I handle the next situation?”

That’s what the book of Deuteronomy is… a looking back on the past and moving forward. Maybe this will help you if you watch Jeopardy, but the title *Deuteronomy* has Greek and Latin origins, which means “repetition of the law”. Moses is retelling God’s law to the nation of Israel. Moses and Israelites are in the 11th month of the 40th year after the exodus from Egypt. They are camped on the east side of the Jordan River, where it feeds into the Dead Sea. Moses’ brother, the high priest, Aaron, has died. Moses will soon die. Joshua, Moses’ right hand man, will soon take over as commander of the armies of Israel. Joshua will lead them into the Promised Land of Canaan. Big changes will happen for this nation. They were seventy people when they moved down to Egypt some 400 years ago, and now there are 2million people strong. They will transition from wanderers to Soldiers, tasked by God to drive out and destroy enemy nations in their new home.

Moses takes the time to review the laws and ceremonies God had given them on Mount Sinai forty years ago. Part of the law giving was a covenant God had made with his people. The covenant he made was that a woman from their nation would give birth to the Savior of the world. Moses reminded them of that promise, so they knew what they could expect from God as they moved forward. Moses also reviewed God’s laws so that they would understand exactly what God expected of them as they moved forward.

What I find interesting when I read previous 9 chapters of Deuteronomy, is that Moses also reviewed the sins of the people. As a nation the people had openly rebelled against God’s leaders. They had tested God. They had complained about the water and food God gave them, they whined about the manna God so graciously provided for them. They didn’t trust God enough to win the victory for them when he had told them to go and conquer the land forty years ago, and then there was the golden calf incident. They had worshiped other gods!

Why would Moses review the past sins of the nation? So that as they looked across the Jordan River, into the Promised Land, they would know that you would not set foot on that land flowing with milk and honey because of how well they obeyed God’s commandments. They would receive this inheritance of land only because God is gracious and merciful and forgiving. As they reflected on God’s goodness to them in the past, they would move forward into the future and be able to answer the question Moses posed, **What does LORD your God ask of you?** as you move forward - **to fear the LORD your God**, give him awe and respect as God, not worship other gods, **to walk in all of his ways**, you don’t get to pick and choose how you want to live, but live according to God’s ways, **to love him, to serve him with all your heart and soul, to observe his commands and decrees which are for your good, to cling to him.**

Have you done that recently? Reflected on that question, “What does the LORD my God ask of me?” What a wonderful privilege you have as a Christian! You know exactly how God wants you to act, how he wants you to live. When you face that major life change, or when you are going through that difficult situation in your life, do you cling to God first, that is, do you run to God first to find strength in his Word, and trust him enough to get you through that situation, or do you worry to the point of unhealthy emotional and physical stress?

When you recall where you were 12 years ago on September 11th, and perhaps like many people you wondered, “Where is God?” And as you closely observe the events that are unfolding in Syria and around the world do you ask the same question, “Where is God?” Or do you put your trust in God that is where he always is, with his people? And do you trust that God is the Almighty, that even these world events are under his supervision?

As you listened to this lesson, did you identify with the “widow and the fatherless” that God spoke of? Are you without parents, who may have abandoned you, or who are not supportive of you, or maybe God has taken them away? Are you without a companion? Maybe you’ve been waiting for that special someone for a long time. Have you done what God asks of you? He asks you to rely on him as your friend and companion when times are lonely. Do you do that? Do you rely on him for strength, or do you wonder if God really loves you, do you wonder if he’s left you all alone?

I don’t about you, but I have to admit that I have not always done what the LORD my God asks of me. And I protest, “But why does God ask me to do things that I cannot do?” Because he is perfect, and hee lives in perfect holiness, and he cannot have creatures who are less than holy live in his presence. He cannot have rebellious, disobedient, untrusting children living in his home.

Why does he show me that I haven’t lived the way he asks me to? So that when I stand at the river, looking into the Promised Land, I know that I will not step foot in there because of how well I have done what God has asked of me, for I know I have not. I have failed too many times to count to fear him, to walk in his ways, I have walked in my ways. I have not loved, served, clung to him with my whole heart and soul.

What God asks of you, he also asked of that promised seed of the Israelites, the one born of Mary, from the family of King David, his Son, Jesus Christ. God the Father asked his Son to fear him, walk in all of his ways, to love him, serve him with all his heart and soul, observe the LORD’s commands and decrees, to cling to him. The Father told his Son, “I am asking you to walk into a world, where terrorists will be seek you out, to destroy you. They will plant their bombs of doubt. They will challenge you – people who were looking for you, waiting for you, will deny that you are the one. They will try to tempt you with, “Is this really worth it?” because so many of your people won’t believe in you. But you will have to trust me to give you strength to endure.

You will have to trust me to provide for you, because you will have no home of your own, no income of your own, no wife to be your companion. Your friends will abandon you. Your mother will not even be able to be there for you to support you all of the time. And especially in your greatest time of need, all will abandon you. But you will have to trust me, cling to me, that I will give you strength to bear it. And then they will put you to death, a horrible, gruesome death. You will be punished for the rebellion of these people. I will punish you because of their lack of trust and unbelief. But then I will raise your dead body from the grave. You will live again, and by your death and resurrection you will show them how much I love them, how much I care for them. There at your cross and empty tomb I will prove to them that I have not left them alone, that I have not forgotten about them, but I will show them that I have done everything I have promised. I will do for them what they could not do, and I will save them from their sins.”

And Jesus did just that. He trusted his Father. He loved his Father. He clung to his Father. He walked in all of his ways - something I could never do perfectly, but Jesus did for me. That’s how much God loves me.

And as I am about to cross over the river into the Promised Land, I know that my entrance into the land flowing with eternal milk and honey does not depend on me. As I stand before God and he asks me, “Did you do what I asked of you?” I will have to humbly answer, “No… but Jesus did. And his righteousness covers over my failure.” Because of Jesus I will cross the river, and live in the Promised Land forever. He has done the same for you.

Because your God has done this for you, he asks, “Will you now do what I, the LORD your God ask of you?” And we will answer, “Yes! Yes I will because of who you are and what you’ve done for me!”

Moses tells us who the LORD our God is, **“To the LORD your God belong the heavens, earth and everything in it.” (vs14)** He will graciously provide for you and your daily bread. He asks you to trust him to provide that daily bread, so you will.

Your God is the **God of gods and Lord of lords (vs17).** He is in charge of the nations. He asks you to trust him when you “never forget” the events of 9/11, when your Soldier is told to march off to war yet again. You will trust that he can and will handle world management 101, because you cannot even begin to understand why he does what he does with the world, but you will trust that he always does what is best for his people, his nation of believers.

**He shows no partiality, accepts no bribes (vs17).** He is different than earthly judges. His decisions are always correct, always fair, always serve his good purposes. He asks you to trust his decision making process, even when it fly flies in the face of what you expected from life, you will trust God’s decisions and know that they are for your good. He asks you to “be still and know that he is God,” (Psalm 46) and you will wait for him and his time, his way.

**He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widows, loves the alien (the foreigner) (vs18).** He asks you to cling to him, to his love for you, know that he is your Father, your friend. He is your companion, when texting and tweeting and emails fail to provide comfort, when friends and family are not available, when they are dead and gone, your God is right there next to you, with his presence, in his Word, so you know his promises, so you know his presence, so you know his love for you.

You know what God asks of you, to **fear the LORD your God**, give him awe and respect as God, **to walk in all of his ways**, **to love him, to serve him with all your heart and soul, to observe his commands and decrees which are for your good, to cling to him.** You will do what God asks of you, for he has so lovingly done what he promised you. Amen.