

Rev. Molly F. James, PhD

Trinity, Nichols, CT

February 12, 2017

[Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#); [Psalm 119:1-8](#); [1 Corinthians 3:1-9](#); [Matthew 5:21-37](#)

My God's Word be spoken. May God's Word be heard. May that point us to the living Word, who is Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Last fall our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, issued a video message for us to help us understand what it means to be a part of the Jesus Movement. Bishop Curry describes the Jesus Movement as “A community of people committed to living the way of Jesus, loving, liberating, and life-giving, and committed to going into the world to help this world become one that is loving, liberating, and life-giving.” He reminded us that we have been called by Jesus to be his witnesses, in our own communities and to the ends of the earth. We are called to be witnesses to “a way that is loving, liberating, and life-giving. . . . [to a way that] can change this world.”¹

I could not help but think of that message - of that eloquent and inspiring description of what it means to follow Jesus - when I read our text for today from Deuteronomy. “Moses said, ‘See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity . . . I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life . . .’”

¹ <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2016/09/15/video-michael-curry-on-loving-liberating-and-life-giving/>

Choose life. Indeed. We are called to be a people who are loving, life-giving and liberating. We are called to chose life, to follow in the way of Jesus. That sounds easy right. I mean when given the choice between life and death who wouldn't choose life?

Often times those choices are easy. We eat food and drink water, because we know that without them we will die. We make our children wear seatbelts and bike helmets. We buy insurance for our bodies, our houses and our cars. We make regular visits to our doctors and our dentists. We choose life - sometimes multiple times a day, probably without even thinking about it or realizing the magnitude of the decisions we are making.

But our choices are not always that easy. Putting on a seatbelt or making a routine visit to the dentist takes very little time out of our week. They are easy to do and doing them does not cost us much effort or money (assuming we have good insurance). But choosing life is not always easy.

Sometimes the loving, life-giving, liberating choice is not the easy one. It can be a real challenge to chose life. In terms of our own self-care, choosing life, choosing to take care of our bodies and our souls can be challenging. It means saying no to things we really want to do, because our plates are too full. It means sacrificing sleep or time relaxing on the couch in order to go to the gym and ensure our bodies get enough exercise. It means spending more time and money on our meals to ensure that we are

not always eating fast food. It means learning to let go of our desire to achieve. It means not get everything on our to do list finished this week, because we have realized that time with our families or a solitary walk in the woods are more important for the health of our souls.

On the interpersonal level, choosing life can sometimes mean that we have to make hard choices about our relationships. Choosing life can mean risking to reach out in love without knowing whether or not that love will be returned. Choosing life can mean speaking up for a friend or family member who is suffering, even if that has a personal cost. Choosing life can even mean ending a relationship that does not serve us or one that has become abusive.

And choosing life often means saying no to other things. If we say yes to exercise and time with our families, we have to resist the temptation to stay in bed longer or to work more. If we say yes to caring for ourselves and the people we love, then we have to say no to relationships that are toxic or destructive. Choosing life means engaging deeply with those around us, and that means taking the risk that we will have our hearts broken or we will lose someone for whom we care deeply.

Choosing life is hard. It is not always the easy choice. And yet there is so much good that comes from choosing life. God promises us blessings when we choose life. And indeed good choices yield good fruits in our lives. Taking care of ourselves and spending time with those we love, sets us on

a path of contentment and joy. And if we feel good about ourselves and are happy, the tasks we face are less daunting. If we are surrounded by people whom we love and who care for us, then we are never overcome by life's challenges.

Although it can be so tempting to give into our own tendencies toward laziness or procrastination, we do know, in our hearts, that our lives are better when we choose life. And the even more amazing thing is that it isn't just about making ourselves feel better. As Bishop Curry noted, If we - each one of us and together as a people of faith - are choosing to follow a way that is loving, life-giving, and liberating than together we can change the world. We know this is true. Joy is contagious. The joy of life is boundless, and it can inspire others.

So, I hope that in this coming week as each of us goes through our daily lives and makes our choices, large and small, mundane and momentous, we will remember the gifts that are found, for ourselves and for the world, when we chose life.

AMEN.