*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 19 - 24

Moses (part two)

**Monday, June 19 Deuteronomy 6:1-25**

*“Love the Lord your God”*

 Moses taught his people, and he teaches us and Christians everywhere, that a true relationship with God arises from the heart and extends to all of life. Those who claim to be religious tend to either see their religion as primarily interior and private, or they treat it as a matter of external performance. True love for God is rooted in the heart, but it is demonstrated in life; specifically a passion to speak of one’s faith in the context of the family and to declare one’s allegiance to God publicly to the world.

 Our text also reminds us of the biblical understanding of love and its expression. Speaking biblically “love” is not merely an emotion, a pleasant disposition toward another person, but commitment demonstrated in actions that seek the interest of the other. Just as in marriage true love is demonstrated not merely or even primarily by roses and verbal utterances of “I love you,” but in actions that seek the well-being and delight of one’s spouse, so true love for God is demonstrated primarily in active obedience to God.

*May all that I am, Lord - heart, soul and strength - love you. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 20 Deuteronomy 8:1-20**

*“Be careful”*

 The significance of this chapter for contemporary Christians may be recognized at many levels, five of which are outlined here. First, like Israel of old, Christians do not live by bread alone but by obedience to the will of God. If we are preoccupied with physical well-being to the neglect of our spiritual life, we too will perish. Second, the image of God as a father testing and disciplining his children offers valuable perspective on the tests and trials we face.

 Third, this passage outlines a common road to idolatry: forgetting God leads to ingratitude, which leads to self-sufficiency, which leads to idolatry. The antidote? An attitude of gratitude! Fourth, we are reminded of the potential danger that lurks with success. Indeed success may be more tragic than failure, especially if it causes us to forget God and results in pride, smugness, and self-sufficiency. Finally, the last verse in this passage provides a sober warning to those seduced by the idolatry of success. If our lives are governed by the values of the world, we incur the wrath of God and will share its fate.

*Help me to remember, Lord, that all I have is a gift from you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 21 Deuteronomy 14:22-15:18**

*“Share freely with those in need”*

 This passage is concerned with the loosening of one’s hold on material possessions: “Do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted” (15:7). While the first clause speaks to interior motivation, the second addresses external action. Taken together, these verses plead for a soft heart and open hands, demonstrated in three areas of life: giving of the tithe (14:22-29), remitting debts (15:1-11), and releasing indentured members of the Israelite community (15:12-18). The tithe talks of hands and hearts that are open toward God, while debts and indenture deal with hands and hearts that are open toward the marginalized in the community.

 These distinctions between God and the marginalized are not absolute. The section on tithes concludes with an appeal to include the Levites in one’s generosity toward God, and the other two sections discuss compassion for the poor in the context of God’s open hands toward Israel – even speaking of release from debts in 15:2 as God’s work. Moses is reminding his hearers that their life consists of worship of God *and* care for others.

*May my hands, Lord, willingly give up to you and others what they hold. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 19 - 24

Moses (part two)

**Thursday, June 22 Deuteronomy 20:1-20**

*“The violence of war”*

  Moses’ focus is on the violence of war. In warfare soldiers must recognize the limits of violence, and the chapter divides into three parts: (1) encouraging troops for battle (vv. 1-9); (2) instructions for battle (vv. 10-18); (3) instructions for siege warfare (vv. 19-20). Because of the reference to the principle of “complete destruction” in verses 16-18, this paragraph is often associated with the notion of “holy war” and is distinguished from the rest of the chapter, which concerns “ordinary” warfare.

 As the Christian church we are engaged in warfare, but this conflict is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers arrayed against God and his church. This battle is not fought with physical spears and swords but with all the spiritual resources provided by God (Ephesians 6:10-20). While the Bible recognizes that the kingdoms of this world will continue to solve their conflicts with violence, the troops in the divine army walk by faith in the One who defends his own.

*While war exists in our world, Lord, may we be people of peace. Amen.*

**Friday, June 23 Deuteronomy 30:1-20**

*“Choose life”*

 This text reminds us that God has taken the initiative in revealing himself in his Word and in Christ, and the commitment that he calls forth from us in response to his revelation is doable. God does not demand of his people that they do the impossible; he asks the reasonable.

 While Israel failed as a nation, God’s response to individuals who choose life offers inspiration to all. Although we must caution against an unhealthy individualism, the fact remains that God takes no pleasure in the death of anyone, and that the course of life is open to all. There are no victims; people’s standing before God and their ultimate destiny – life or death – is in their own hands. Such is the gospel according to Moses, and such is the gospel according to Jesus, who invites us to “enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matthew 7:13). This is not only a warning against choosing the wrong path that leads to death and destruction, but also an invitation to choose the path of life.

*I have chosen life, Lord, and my eternal destiny is in your hands. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 24 Deuteronomy 31:1-29**

*“Joshua becomes Israel’s leader”*

 As was the case with the divine and Mosaic commissioning of Joshua, and the great commissioning of the apostles by Jesus, God always provides the leadership needed to fulfill his calling. While every generation of leaders must hand the baton to successors, thankfully, neither new leaders nor the people in their charge are left to their own resources. The keys to the fulfillment of God’s mission remain acceptance of the commission received from him and trust in his promised presence.

 Times of transition represent tests of faith: Will we and our leaders put our confidence in God, or will we turn to false gods, on the one hand, or to despair, on the other? The history of Israel demonstrates that despite every privilege and every needed provision, those who claim to be God’s people have the propensity to be distracted by other objects of devotion, to falter in their faith, and to lose sight of their mission as the agents of divine blessing. At such times, more than ever, we need the Word of God to show us the path back to him.

*You are faithful to your church, Lord, providing for godly leadership. Amen.*