

Sunday 12th Feb 2017
Choice: Life or Death? Deut. 30:15-20

2017 Budget

Our budget this year is £16000 more than current figures suggest that we will receive in

Our budget is currently as tight and restricted as possible

We need to PRAY... for God to provide us with all that we need

But in praying, as I have said before, we need to be prepared to be the answer to our own prayers

Can I ask all of us to carefully & prayerfully think about what we give to church for its running and mission and ministry.

As a PCC we have decided to give 2% of all our unrestricted income back to God for mission and outreach. There is a clear biblical principle of giving of our first fruits to God and so we have decided on 2% The money is being kept aside each month and as a church, later in the year, we will be deciding where that money should go

£16000 shortfall is a serious budget deficit.

But we are at the beginning of the year and so have 10 months to pray and act upon this.

To make it sound not so HUGE and out of reach here is something to think about

Say we have 60 regular worshippers here at St Georges,

If each of us 60 were to give an extra £5 per week to St Georges, that would almost make up the deficit.

A bottle of wine, a couple of Latte's, bit less chocolate, 1 less plant from the garden centre.... Is there something we could do without, save the money and give it to St Georges to further God's work in this place?

Or... something different. Our Council Tax is paid over 10 months, we don't have to pay any in Feb & March. What do we do with that extra £120 / £150 this month and next? Is that something that you could consider giving.

This is NOT a pressure sell.

But it is - letting you know that our financial budget for this year is not looking good

- asking you to commit to praying for God's provision

- asking you to pray about what you give and see if you could commit to giving a little more this year.

PRAY NOW

Joshua 24:14 + 15

"Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua was the man, chosen as the successor to Moses, the one who would lead the people of Israel in to the promised land. He is publicly stating the choice that he and his household were

making in relation to the choice that is clearly explained to us in our reading from Deuteronomy this morning.

Choose today who you are going to **serve**... The Lord God? or other gods? But me and my family, **WE ARE GOING TO SERVE THE LORD !**

Choice!

We are surrounded by choices every day. Just go in to any supermarket...

Grapes - white red black or... just in case you cannot make up your mind - a punnet of mixed Lemonade - regular, sugar free, cloudy or traditional OR Sprite if you want something almost the same but different!!

And then there are the shampoos... HOW many makes to choose from?? A whole aisle!.....

We are used to making choices, but usually from a multiple choice. This or that or maybe that... What are you like when driving and you come to a T junction? They were often 'interesting' moments, out in the car, dad driving and mum navigating and we arrive at T junction.

Left OR Right.... no in between. All before - sat-navs I hasten to add!

If I am out driving and a friend navigating (I don't have a sat nav) then I would say... I don't mind which, I don't mind if we get it wrong and have to turn round later. Just DECIDE! Left or right!

And here we are in our reading from Deuteronomy.

Moses is telling the people he is leading... you have to make a choice.

Life and prosperity OR Death and adversity

Which will it be?

Remember - the Israelite people had been in captivity in Egypt. They had been slaves suffering from conditions that were made worse over time. They had been in enforced bondage.

But their God Yahweh had set them free and they had chosen to enter in to a covenant with their God. It was a mutual agreement, they had been entrusted with Gods Law and had survived the long and challenging journey and were about to enter the promised land.

Moses said to the people You have a choice... a choice between LIFE and DEATH between BLESSINGS and CURSES. It is your choice. I urge you to choose LIFE but it is your choice.

A T junction type choice.... not a multiple choice!

Life and prosperity or death and adversity

A no brainer we might think! Why would anyone choose death rather than life? Adversity rather than blessing?

Let's just think for a moment... The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. They had been told what to do and how to live and there had been tough demands placed upon them.

Now they were free from Pharaoh and the Egyptians They were looking forward to the promised land full of milk and honey

And Moses is telling them that there is a choice but choosing the road to Life and prosperity will mean obeying the Lords commands, his decrees and ordinances, Loving God, walking in His ways. And maybe... just maybe... they wanted to be free from obeying what someone else was expecting of them! They wanted to choose and do things there own way for a change!!!

Following the decrees of Yahweh maybe felt restrictive... More like a list of DO NOT's rather than freedom and life.

Sound familiar? (How many students, who have lived in healthy homes with good and realistic boundaries go off to university and do things their own way? Make their own choices?

The thing is... the laws of the Lord, His commands, His ways had not been given to achieve perfection or individual holiness. They had been given to a nation in order to preserve the covenant that had been willingly entered in to ...CHOSEN... by God and the Israelites - the covenant grounded in mutual love and respect. But more importantly the commands were given as a means of preserving right relationships... with God and with each other. The choice of life Jesus said in Johns Gospel I am the way, the truth and the life.... He said to his disciples to follow him.... choose His way.

Here in our reading there is a choice of A or B a spiritual T junction! Maybe the Israelites, maybe we would like some choices in between!

Real obedience to the law involves listening and discerning at the core of our being. It is a matter of the heart as well as the mind.

Moses says that if we turn our heart away from God, if we do not listen and really hear then we will be led astray and other 'gods' will take over the place of our Lord.

It is so easy to get distracted... to take a glimpse in the wrong place to take a step in the wrong direction...

We can read in our gospel reading today what happens when relationships break down.

The choice between life and death is not an overly restrictive choice... with a lot of DON'T DO's but it is a choice.

Do we want to live within the safe, healthy, liberating, transforming boundaries that are set out in the Law and Commandments that our loving God has given us or do we want to do things our own way?

Are we going to choose life and prosperity or death and adversity

Moses gives a choice of 2 ways.... not a lot or variable in between

The way of life is a way of fullness of life and not constriction

And Jesus is the way, the truth and the life

Just as I said that when I am driving I like the navigator to make a decision and tell me Left OR Right and if we get it wrong then we can turn around

Life is a long process of choosing If we have made wrong choices with God and sometimes chosen to turn our hearts away and go our own way instead of His He gives us another chance and we can turn towards Life and prosperity if we choose to.

Have we made the choice of Life..... do we need to turn away from something in order to turn back to the path of life?

We can come to communion this morning, offering ourselves completely

We will receive in return all we need to live life in all its fullness

We NEED the strength of Christ to help us and the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us

Let us choose LIFE again today.