

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

**Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 18) – September 4, 2022**

*“Therefore choose life... loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him. For he is your life and length of days.”*

*-Deuteronomy 30:19a-20a-*

In these verses, Moses’ plea to the Israelites reflects God’s desires for them as they prepare to enter the Promised Land under Joshua’s leadership: Choose life, not death; choose blessings, not curses (see Deut. 30:15-20).

Moses then tells the Israelites (and us) what choosing life looks like: “loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him.” In other words, the life God calls them/us to live consists of a loving relationship with him in which they/we daily hold fast, “cling,” “stay close,” “follow closely,” “stick to,” and “stick with” (Blue Letter Bible’s definition of the Hebrew word דָּבַק, transliterated *dāḇaq*, in verse 20) him. And as we דָּבַק/*dāḇaq* him, he calls us to listen for his voice in all the various ways he speaks, and to obey him.

These verses testify to the relationship God desires with all his children. They point to the fact that Christianity/following Jesus consists not of religious ritual and rules, but of relationship with the one who is life itself. As Moses proclaims, “For he is your life.” Jesus himself confirms Moses’ statement when he declares, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and teaches that he gives abundant and eternal life to all who walk in loving, obedient relationship with him (see Jn. 10:10, 14:23).

Jesus, like Moses in the above verses, also taught that this is a life and death choice. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus states: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it [death], but whoever loses their life for me will find it [life]” (Matt. 16:24b-25a, NIV, brackets mine). In Luke 14:27 Jesus again explains: “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me [life] cannot be my disciple [death]” (brackets mine).

So, both the Old and New Testaments depict God graciously offering and encouraging us to choose life in him. He makes known his desires and promises for a loving relationship in which he speaks to us and guides us in his ways as we דָּבַק/*dāḇaq* him. And he gives us himself – abundant and eternal life –when we choose life.

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