

Deuteronomy 26:1-13

11/3/24

Thank you for showing up to walk with Jesus. Thank you for choosing to do soul work.

But before we ever grabbed on to Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Lord elected us! The Lord chooses you. The Lord chooses you to do soul work. The Lord chooses you to live generously!

We have been watching the *Chosen* series in my Sunday School class, and in episode 3 there are a few scenes of Jesus praying when He goes to bed and when He gets out of bed. The prayer is all about thanking God, and it’s a form of the Shema found in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, Israel, the Lord Your God is one. Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, mind and strength.”

Jesus starts and ends His day with gratitude. Study after study shows that an attitude of gratitude benefits our physical health, our mental health, and our spiritual health. I would argue that our spiritual health is a leading indicator of our mental and physical health. Do you make it a habit to start and end the day with a prayer of thanksgiving?

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Today I want to talk about how gratitude is soul work as we hear Colossians 2:6-7.

If you don’t work at it, you will not be thankful. If you don’t work at it, you won’t appreciate people in your life. If you don’t work at it, you will live as a zombie. A few days after Halloween, Jesus doesn’t want any of us being zombies but to be awake!

As we can see an attitude of gratitude is Biblical. The Lord commands that we remember whose we are and where we have come from in Deuteronomy 26:5. Jesus teaches us to pray when we lie down, “Our Father, who is in Heaven...” And when we wake up, “Our Father, who is in Heaven...” Prayer is the most important part of soul work: praying to remind ourselves of our identity. The Lord Jesus generously gives His life for ours, and in response we generously give!

Generosity is an act of gratitude! Jesus’ whole ministry is fueled by gratitude. Your life can be fueled by gratitude when you walk with Jesus. Prayer and worship keeps us connected to walk with Jesus.

As this election approaches, we have heard a lot about immigration. People wanting to come to the US will not stop until we figure out as a nation how to live by the Lord’s command in Deuteronomy 26:13. How can we as a nation share the profits with the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant? We can do it, but we must choose to do it. Gratitude, generosity is soul work.

Does anyone here ever wake up in the middle of the night worrying? Lately I have been waking up in the middle of the night worrying about this or that. In the *Chosen series*, the prayer Jesus prays has a part that says, “May it be Your will, Lord my God and God of my ancestors, that I lie down in peace and that I arise in peace. Let my sleep be undisturbed by troubling thoughts, bad dreams, and wicked schemes.” From Jesus, I have one practical word of advice if you are like me waking up in the middle of the night, Pray a prayer of thanksgiving. Thank the Lord that you are in a warm bed. Thank the Lord for the blessings throughout the day. Then begin to thank the Lord for the people in your life and say a good word for them, a blessing. Think of your enemies. Say a blessing for them. And then actively choose to live generously the next day. Living generously is showing gratitude that you are walking with Jesus.

Does anyone here ever have a bad day? If you are having a bad day, stuck in a rut, a little bit down, Jesus teaches us to choose to generously live to receive joy. Joy is at the center of the Christian faith. Eucharist is the Greek word that means “thanksgiving.” And at the center of the Greek word Eucharist is the Greek word Chara which means joy. When we choose to walk with Jesus we are choosing joy. Jesus shows us the way to experience joy amid suffering. Jesus shows us the way to overcome bad days, to get out of a rut by responding with gratitude and generosity. Happiness happens to us. Joy is what we can bring to the world.

Think of the Eucharist. On the night of Jesus’ arrest and betrayal, the disciples are celebrating Passover. They are celebrating the Lord saving them from slavery. They are celebrating that the Lord elects us. In response for the Lord electing us, we are to elect generous living by sharing with the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant. As Jesus responds to a sinful and broken world with generosity, we are to choose to respond to a sinful and broken world with generosity!

If you want the way to sleep well at night, if you want the way to respond to a bad day, if you want to experience joy in suffering, trusting in Jesus Christ is all that matters!

That’s ultimately what the Bible teaches. Trusting in Jesus is all that matters. Paul writes Colossians from prison about 15 years after Jesus’ ascension into Heaven. Paul knows Jesus lives because Paul walks with Jesus. Paul knows Jesus lives because Paul everyday reaches out and grabs Jesus. I use the words “walk with” and “reaches out and grabs” because that’s how Paul says it in the Greek. If you look at Colossian 2:6, “As you therefore have received Jesus Christ the Lord...” The word “received” could be translated as “reach out and grab.” When we reach out and grab, we are actively choosing. God’s Word teaches us that we must daily actively choose to walk with Jesus.

Then the verse ends with, “continue to live your life in Him...” or we can translate it “continue to walk with Jesus.” Christian faith is commitment to walk with Jesus. Christian faith is soul work. Christian faith is living an attitude of gratitude.

Love,  
Pastor Curtis