

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Book of Deuteronomy, the thirtieth chapter, beginning at the ninth verse:

Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that you would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus tells us the story of a man who was beaten and left for

dead. As he lay there dying, many people would walk right past him and offer no help. Then a man comes and takes care of the man who was beaten. He offers him water to drink and wine for his wounds. Then the man proceeds to carry the man to a place of rest and pays for everything the man could need to get better.

Many people know this as the parable of the Good Samaritan. And yet I submit to you that it is Christ's very own description of all that He has done for us and how He cares for us. He sees us beaten and bruised, left for dead by our sins and by Satan. Then many 'teachers' and 'friends' pass us by as we lie there dying. But Christ comes and takes perfect care of us. Giving us water to cleanse us and wine for our wounds. And He also pays for everything that we need to get better.

But this is not a sermon on the Good Samaritan; rather, this is a sermon on the great things that Jesus Christ has left for us, so that we can remember all He has done for us, and the benefit that they give to us. And all of this is seen in God's Word... which is so much more than this Bible we have. Dear friends, just like the Samaritan was to the one beaten and bruised, and just like Moses told the Israelites before His death, "The Word is near you."

Now I don't know about you, but I've heard and read the parable of the Good Samaritan many times and yet at no time has it ever come across that the man who was beaten and bruised and left for dead did anything to make himself better. In fact, Jesus is telling this parable against a man who is looking for a way to not help someone and not care for another by

asking Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” And Jesus answers with this parable.

Moses on the other hand was leading the Israelites for the previous forty years. As he led them he saw them through many problems and strife in their lives. He pleaded to God for them. He interceded with God for them. He led them as no one before nor after had. And as he is getting ready to die, he leaves them with the message from our text in which he reminds them, “The Lord will make you prosperous...” Moses makes sure to remind the Israelites that it is God who will prosper them. It is God who will do everything for them. It is God... not them. However, we know the history of the Israelites and we know our own history. We know that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he was not completely dependent on God and His

Word. We know that Israel sinned much and at many points on their journey grumbled and wished they were back under the control of the Egyptians.

And it is still so striking how much our own lives mirror that of the Israelites. God promises to take care of everything for us, and we constantly want to return to our sinful nature, the Egypt of our souls. We want to return to the slavery of sin, instead of the freedom of Christ.

Don't get me wrong, we all speak a good game, but when the rubber meets the road it can be a completely different story. Many times we become just like the Israelites and though we know that God has provided, we still look for a reason or excuse to go back into our own slavery. God has blessed me with above average wisdom... so I will use this to study and

get further from God, instead of studying God's Word; God has blessed me with above average looks, so I will go out and serve my own sinful devices and desires, instead of being faithful to my spouse; God has blessed me with above average wealth, so I will hoard it and not be there for God. It is at times so easy to take what God has provided and run from God To desire to be back under our slavery to sin and to be in the control of our sinful nature because "it's more fun" or "it feels good."

And yet, God has promised that He will prosper us... when we obey the words written in this "Book of the Law." And I think that we can all admit and confess that we have not kept the words in this "Book of the Law." And yet Moses tells us that what he is commanding us is not too hard. It is not beyond our grasp, it is

not up in heaven or across the sea, or even far away from us... it is near to us. And what is near to us? The word.

The Word is very near to us. Especially when we consider and remember all that the Word of God is. The Word of God is not nearly the words spoken nor the words written, the word of God is also Jesus Christ Himself. As John tells us in his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh." We all confess and admit that this is a direct reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus is known as the Word of God. And what does Moses promise us? The word is near you. Even in the Old Testament, even 1500 years before Jesus was born, Moses is reminding the people that the Word of God is near them. That God, through His

word and through obeying His Word,
would prosper all His people.

And so long as we're continuing in our honesty, so many times in our own life it does not seem as though the Word of God is near us. It does not feel as though Christ is near us and comforting us, as He did in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Many times it feels as though He is this far off thought... this far away thought. Maybe He is up in heaven... separated from us by space and time. Maybe He is over the sea... separated by waves and storms and trials and temptations. But that is not what the Word of God says... Moses, in the Word of God, tells us that Jesus, the Word of God, is near us. Even Jesus Himself before He ascends to heaven has a message for His disciples, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." And Jesus is near us:

So near us that He lived and died for us. So near that He spent His life perfecting fulfilling God's holy Law and then He spent His final hours hanging on a cross to pay for all the sin we have committed and will commit. If only for that reason, Jesus Christ is the closest person to us. Think of how you would feel towards another individual if they saved you from death... and remember that Jesus saved you from eternal death. This is how close, how near to you He is... but He is even nearer.

As Moses tells us, "The Word is very near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart, so you may obey it." And, dear friends, the Word of God is very near us. It is in our mouths and in our hearts.

The night before Jesus died, He told His disciples to "Take, eat" and "Take, drink"

His very body and blood. And to this day, we continue to do this in our celebration of Holy Communion. We take and eat, we take and drink the very body and blood of our Lord and Savior... and I ask, can we be any closer?

Moses also tells us that the Word is in our heart. As we hear the Word of God preached, when we read it for ourselves, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, when we are baptized; all of these are times that the Word is further embedded in our hearts. These are all times that the Word is placed into our hearts. That our faith is strengthened, that the Holy Spirit works in us to give our New Man the strength he needs to defeat the Old Adam. And in this constant struggle, we do all that we can to keep the Word near us, because the Old Man wants it far, far away.

And then Moses tells us that with the nearness of the Word, we are able to "obey it." This does not mean that we can obey the commandments perfectly like Christ did. Rather, this is our chance to follow the example of Christ. Hearing God's Word and making sure that we apply it to our lives. Reading God's Word and inwardly digesting that word. Coming to Communion to receive bodily our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Being baptized, having the Holy Spirit enter our hearts to create faith in all that Jesus has done for us. And when we have this faith... when we strengthen the New Man, then we can begin to lead a God pleasing life. It is not because of us, it is only because of God that this is all possible.

Dear friends in Christ, the Word is very near you. As Jesus laid out in the parable

of the Good Samaritan, the Word, Jesus, the Good Samaritan is there to help us when we are bloodied and bruised by sin. He gives us water, Baptism, and then He gives us wine, Holy Communion. And He pays for all of our pain and hurt, he pays for everything that has happened to us and makes us whole.

We close with the words of Paul, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Thank God He has done all of this, Thank God the Word is so near to us, and Thank God that we have the Word in our mouths and in our hearts.

Thanks be to God. Amen.