

The Source Of Prosperity

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[0 : 00] O Lord, Heavenly Father, in whom the fullness of life and wisdom enlighten our minds by thy Holy Spirit and give us grace to receive thy word with reverence and humility without which no man can understand thy truth.

For Christ's sake, amen. I'd like to suggest a small game that you could play with one piece of paper and pencil this afternoon.

A very serious game, though. I'd like you to anticipate in the year 1986 how many people will come to you and ask for money.

And then I want you to figure out how much you're going to give them. You know, just you can anticipate all the requests you're going to get in the mail. You can assign \$100 to this one and \$1,000 to this one and \$0.10 to this one and on and on you can go.

Then you add up all that money that you're going to give. And you then just bow your head and say a little prayer and say, Lord, this is the money I want to give.

[1 : 30] If I make myself responsible for giving that, will you make yourself responsible for looking after me? I feel like the long of the earth.

Can you see where I'm going? It's simply that this is what pledge cards are about. This is why we ask you that you will commit your support.

Not just because we have a need to maintain the work and ministry of this church, but so that you might know in the stewardship of all that belongs to you how you want to use it.

So I commend that as a suitable form of Sunday afternoon entertainment and enlightenment for you. The passage that we're looking at today is Deuteronomy 6, verses 1 to 9.

And again, this is the passage that some of the Bible study groups worked on last week. And it is one of the most basic statements to the whole of our life and the whole of the way we live it.

[2 : 54] And so I want to go over it with you briefly. It begins, now this is the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances, which the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land of which you are going over to possess it.

This is the commandment. We've read the Ten Commandments this morning. This is the commandment that you're reading now. And it comes down to verse 4.

The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And everything else emerges out of the commandment.

And that is the commandment. People who are wise about such matters say the ordinances and statutes, which emerge out of the commandment, begin in verse, in chapter 12 of Deuteronomy.

So if you want to know what the ordinances and statutes are, then you turn to chapter 12, but not now. That's another thing you can do perhaps this afternoon.

[4 : 10] So you're going to have a full afternoon. The occasion of this is that Moses is really saying goodbye to a people whom he has led for 40 years, from their captivity in Egypt, their bondage through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, and he's led them rather like a nomadic tribe in the terrible and austere desert of Arabia and the Red Sea area for 40 years.

He said, Now you are going over into the land to possess it. Now, the land that they were going over into was not like the land that they had been wandering in for 40 years.

It was as though you had lived in a complete barren wasteland, living day by day from hand to mouth, starvation facing you all the time, longing and dreaming for food and fruit and milk and honey and every imaginable kind of luxury would fill your dreams at night as you lay alone under the cold sky of the wilderness.

And you dream that one day this would be over. And Moses says, Now it's over. You're going into the land, the land which God has long since promised you, a land that you are to possess, a land that's going to become yours.

You're going to become a very wealthy people, very rich indeed. Do you want to know how rich? Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8, and I will lay it before you.

[6 : 19] This was the problem that Moses had as these people headed into the land that they were to possess. Chapter 8 and verse 7.

The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper, and you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

That's what they were going into. And you can imagine how their mouth watered and their hearts longed for and lusted after that land they were going to go into.

You know, if you put a great banquet in front of a thousand starving people, they would tear each other to pieces to get at the food. So when God puts this great gift before his people, he's concerned that they will simply destroy themselves in the luxury which they have been given.

It sounds almost like British Columbia. Ah, a land flowing with milk and honey. See what he says to them in verse 11 of chapter 8.

[8 : 07] Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his ordinances, his statutes, which I command you this day. Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and live in them, when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God.

The Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground, where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end.

Beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this well. You see, Moses realized what they were going into, what they were facing, and he knew the hearts of this people whom he had led these 40 years.

So he said, you've got to beware lest you say, by my own hand I have accomplished this and I will enjoy it.

To the full. And Moses says, I know you won't. I know you won't. The only way you can submit yourself to the terrible temptation, which the prosperity that is soon going to be yours, the only way you can live in the midst of all that prosperity is this.

[10 : 22] That's when he goes back and gives them the principles by which they must live. That you may fear the Lord your God. There's a kind of spectrum in this passage from what I would like to think of as absolutely terrifying fear of the Holy One of Israel to love.

The spectrum goes from fear to love. He says that you're to fear the Lord your God. And he says, not only that, but your fear is to be so infectious that your sons after you will fear him.

Otherwise you'll be wiped out in one generation. And not only you're the next generation, but the generation after that will know the fear of the Lord in the midst of the prosperity that they are enjoying.

And if in the midst of prosperity the fear of the Lord is lost, then everything's lost. I don't have to enlarge on that for your benefit, I'm sure.

But you may fear the Lord your God, you, your sons, and your sons' sons, by keeping these statutes and commandments which I command you all the days of your life.

[11 : 59] Not just a kind of impulse from time to time to turn to God, but that day after day after day after day you will fear the Lord your God.

even through, though your days may be prolonged, you will continue to fear.

Then he comes to verse 3. He says, Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do what you hear, that it might go well with you, that you might multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

And there is our Father God who in his love for us desires to give us all that we long for and knows that in doing that the relationship between ourselves and him may well be destroyed because as soon as we have all this we will forget him and say, I have gotten this by my own hand.

And then all is lost. So he says, Listen, that it may go well with you, that you may go into this land flowing with milk and honey.

[13 : 35] Then he comes to verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. It's, uh, Do you know what this is like?

I wish I knew a lot about physics, but I don't. The only thing I know is that E equals MC squared. And, uh, if you don't know about that, I'll tell you about it during coffee.

It won't take me long. Because I don't know that much about it either. But, uh, what it has to do is with energy and mass.

Now, E has equaled MC squared since the first day of creation. We didn't know about it, but it, in fact, was true then.

And various brilliant Greek and Arabian astronomers and physicists all examined the world in which they live, a world in which E equaled MC squared, but they didn't know about it.

[14 : 53] And Copernicus, he made great discoveries, but he didn't know about it. And Newton, he made great discoveries, but he didn't know about it. And on and on the history went on.

And for every one of them, it was true, but they didn't know about it. And I think that's kind of like this commandment. The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

That this is the absolute secret to human existence and countless cultures and generations come and go without discovering the reality of this.

They don't know it. And we only know it very dimly and very distantly. This week from France, apparently some doctors came up with what they thought would be a medicine that would be a great help with the present terror of AIDS.

But the scientists of the world stood back and said, wait a minute, this has to be tested. This has to be proven. This has to be worked through our laboratories.

[16 : 12] This has to be guaranteed in some way. And they were right and wise to do it. They wanted to be sure it was true. So we've had countless generations of history who have taken this commandment, the Lord our God is one Lord and thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind, with all your soul and strength.

We were tested to see is that in fact the truth? What would happen if the people did this? I read in the province this morning that the Lord's day is now finished as far as the lower mainland is concerned.

The necessity for the buck prevails in Maple Ridge and in Abbotsford and in Surrey and all over. That's the way it is.

That's the law. And now all the places are open because they have to be because of economic necessity. We all recognize it and in this great democracy I'm being cynical.

I can feel it coming out of my course. That's the great truth.

[17 : 39] And we have all sorts of ideas. You're entering into this land if you'll keep the value of the dollar high, if you'll keep unemployment down, if you will control inflation, then you will live long and then you will prosper.

That's a possibility that we've considered. And there's all sorts of economic theories. If we go into high tech, then we will live long and then we will prosper and then we will enjoy the land which we've been given to possess.

We keep out aliens and other people that we don't want. Then we will live long and then we will prosper. And theory after theory is presented to us and we say, yes, that must be it or yes, that must be it or this theory.

Moses said the theory of how a people are to prosper as a people is that at the very heart of those people will be this commandment that thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength.

maybe that's where prosperity ultimately comes from. Maybe that's what we need to know. Maybe that's what we need to understand.

[19 : 04] And so important is it in the minds of, in the mind of Moses as he instructs these people. He says to them, these words which I have commanded you this day shall be upon your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children. Good. It has to be taught. The purpose of God is not something which is transferred from him to us by osmosis.

It's down in words and these words are to be in our hearts and we are to teach these words diligently to our children. Words.

We confront words because God has spoken to us in words and our minds and all the, all of the faculties of our bodies are to absorb and understand and interpret words and he said you're to teach them when you sit down in your house you're to talk about them.

When you walk around the seawall in Stanley Park you're to talk about them. When you lie down at night and the lights go out you're to think about them.

[20 : 27] And when the alarm goes off in the morning if by God's grace it's not a disc jockey on a radio that alarms you in the morning you're to think about them then.

so that your mind is completely and utterly focused upon these words.

You're to take them and tie them around your head so that they're in front of your eyes all the time. You're to bind them with cords around your fingers so that you can't do anything with your hands except you are thinking about the law the commandment of God.

And that's what Moses tells them to do. You're to take them and you're to write them on the doorpost of your house so that it's there whenever you go out and whenever you come in it's right there.

When you get to the gate to open it there it is again. now that's that's what Moses wants us to do and I'm sure that it's I'm sure this passage haunts us.

[21 : 44] I'm sure this commandment in a sense haunts us. I don't think any judge can pass sentence in any of the courts of this city without facing the ultimate question.

Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength. I don't think any doctor can administer to a patient without wondering if he is living in obedience to that law.

I don't think any counselor can counsel. I don't think any merchant can sell. I don't think any businessman can strike a deal.

I don't think you can do anything without the awareness that in some way or other this is either defying or obeying the commandment that the Lord our God is one and that thou shalt love the Lord your God with your heart and mind and strength.

that's what life is about and the reason is that you may know God. It's funny because when Moses says tie it on your head tie it on your hands write it on your doorpost look what Jeremiah says in 31 and verse 31 because it's a kind of updating of this.

[23 : 19] Jeremiah 31 and verse 31 says in one of the sort of classical passages the days are coming says the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah not like the covenants which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt my covenant which they broke though I was their husband says the Lord by this covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord I will put my law within them and I will write it upon their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people and no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother saying know the Lord for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest says the Lord for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more see somehow this law has to penetrate even more deeply into us it has to become the very center of our being this law has in a sense become flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus

Christ to believe on him is to obey this law put our whole hearts trust in him it says in this passage from Jeremiah that God wanted to be the husband he wanted people to know him the husband knows his wife and the wife knows her husband we are to know our God to know him intimately and deeply and personally and from the heart and that's the end result of this command and I don't think I don't know how we are to survive as persons or as a people who can't learn the Lord our God is one

Lord we are to love him with all our heart with all our soul and with all our strength that is the absorbing focus and center of our lives we are so much enriched from those people who stood as a kind of nomadic band on the borders of the promised land we are a people who have Jesus Christ to be our second Moses he has by his resurrection prepared for us a land which it is his purpose to bring us a land where death shall be no more where the knowledge of our God will be perfect in our hearts even as his knowledge of us is perfect now that's what we are called this is the command that we can give amen our her ...

... .. Thank you.

Thank you.

[28 : 28] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[30 : 58] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.