

Reflection 6th March 2024 Linda E Hunter

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5 – 9, Matthew 5: 17 - 19

If we join a society or club we are expected to keep the rules. These are usually outlined in the information booklet we receive when we join, along with the procedures or action that will be taken if they are not followed. People who join have the choice to either follow them or, facing up to the consequences of their actions if they don't.

Deuteronomy is a book which is very clear about choice and the consequences. It begins in chapter 1 with these words *'These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan'* For the most part, the book is a recounting, by Moses, of the events that led Israel to the banks of the Jordan River—ready to cross into the Promised Land.

At the section of the reading, we heard today Moses says: *So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.'*

Moses recognises the helplessness of the people, of their need for some meaningful direction, so in his speech or perhaps it could even be termed 'a sermon' he is preparing them for their entrance into the Promised Land. Knowing that it will not be him but Joshua, (who will lead them into the promised land) he tries to offer them a more secure prospect.

Emphasising the importance of the Jewish Law to the future of the Jewish people. He is making every effort to help them understand the choice that **they make** will influence their future which rests on their obedience to God's commands. The statutes and ordinances that he will outline later provide the framework for the structure of Israel as a community. These rules for living help order public behaviour, religious practices and political affairs.

Moses hopes that the people will do what God teaches and calls them to do; and that in their listening and action they will grow as people of faith.

This faithful living has practical consequences for those individuals and communities.

Their obedience to God's direction will enable them to have long life and the experience of divine blessings in the Promised Land.

They will gain the respect of surrounding nations which would benefit them greatly. Anyone who thinks of Israel as a *"great nation"* and *"a wise and discerning people"* is less likely to try to conquer Israel—and is more likely to treat Israel with respect.

Secondly, they are witness to the nature of Israel's covenant with God. God wants his people to keep his law, imparted through Moses. He wants them to create a well-ordered, peaceful society. A society where people can live together in a community, to trust in him and grow in their relationship with him too.

So, what is this saying to us today?

Yes, I suppose it could be about making sure we follow the rules and conventions of the groups we belong to, but it is much more than that. It is about relationships and trust. It's about fashioning our daily life in a way that God is central to what we do, it's about deepening and developing us

relationship with him. It is growing more like him in what we say and do, which is neatly summed up in the prayer of St. Richard of Chichester.

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have given us, for all the pain and insults you have borne for us. Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.