

*...I have set before you today  
life and death,  
blessings and curses.  
Choose life  
so that you and your descendants may live,  
loving the Lord your God...*

Life and death.  
It's a black and white decision.  
Choose life.  
It's the only choice.

We choose death all the time.  
We make poor choices and go down the wrong path.  
But that doesn't make it right.  
There's really only one choice.  
Life is the only choice.

I don't like black and white.  
I don't like binary.  
This OR that.  
The world is too complicated for that.

Take our stained glass windows for instance.  
The insurance company highlighted our need for restoration.  
*If you don't get these windows restored,  
we won't be able to insure them within five years.*

Ok. So that was a black and white decision.  
Only one way to move ahead!

But how?

So many options.

Do them all at once

and get it over with by early 2021?

Or spread it out

and only take half of them at one time?

Well, you can see that the vestry elected to get it done faster.

We didn't want this project going on for what seemed like forever.

Then, do we put up new plexiglass when the windows come back

or opt for the more expensive but more effective tempered glass?

We went with the tempered glass.

And then perhaps most consequential of all:

what do we do while the windows are gone?

The contract calls for each window to be filled with plywood

and painted

to match both the interior and the exterior of the church.

Which would have essentially meant worshiping in a cave for a year!

Nobody wanted that.

So...what to do?

Put the old plexiglass back up.

Which is what you see.

It lets in light,

so we aren't in a cave.

But, depending on the cloud cover and the angle of the sun and all of that,

sometimes it lets in too much light.

And look, the plexiglass on the north side is pretty clear.

That on the south side is clouded.

Because that's what happens to plexiglass in the sun.

The plastic...turns.

And so eventually, there will be a film over the windows,  
to block a little light,  
to cover the cloudy plexiglass  
and to give us some semblance of normalcy  
for our year of worship without our beautiful windows.

But for now  
-for these weeks  
-you and I are seeing the church in a whole new light.  
Literally, SO MUCH LIGHT!

We think of light and dark  
- especially in church  
- where we worship the Light of the World  
-we think of light as good and dark as bad.  
Another binary choice.  
Life and death.  
Light and dark.

But light can be overwhelming.  
It can be glaring.  
It can be hot  
- especially refracted through a piece of clear glass.

Next time you're cold,  
just remember what it feels like  
to get into your car in a shadeless parking lot  
after an hour of shopping on a summer afternoon!

Light, especially too much light,  
isn't always a good thing.

And the dark.

Yes, the dark is where, as the Bible says,  
we hide to do our deeds of darkness.

The dark is a place that,  
in our collective unconscious,  
we have hid the bogey man  
and the demons we cannot face.

The dark is all of that.

But put the darkness up next to the light.

Do that, and the darkness starts to offer more.  
The darkness defines the light.

Wander any museum,

from the LaGrange Art Museum to the Uffizi in Florence,  
and you can see the ways in which light and dark play off each other  
- offering definition,  
creating space,  
places for your eye to rest  
and give meaning to the image that you see.

Light and dark.

Life and death.

We say all the time  
- not EVERYTHING is so life and death.  
Not every decision is a life and death decision.

But after reading Deuteronomy,

I wonder.

I mean,

what if every decision really is a life and death decision?

In every instance,  
we have a choice,  
between the thing that brings life  
and the thing that brings death.

Sometimes it has to do with marriage or career or child rearing,  
or any number of other things that really are a BIG DEAL!

But what if other things are life or death too.

Yes, things like pork chop or salad.

But also that time when you are sitting in your car  
and you are trying to decide:

*listen to a podcast,  
or call my sister?*

*It's been two weeks since we hung up on each other screaming  
and she needs to apologize  
and mom always takes her side*

*and...she's also probably about to get divorced*

*and...she's got a teenager*

*struggling with school and life*

*and...well,*

*do I call her*

*or wait till Christmas?*

Life or death.

There's no easy answer.

I mean, we always need to choose life.

That part is simple.

But it's hard to tell which one is life

and which one is death,

even between the pork chop and the salad!

I wonder if our windows give us a little bit of an answer?

What if we can decide:

which is life

and which is death

by putting them up alongside each other?

By letting the darkness define the light?

By saying

- I see the ways that the darkness has given shape to the light.

And in that clarity

- not the harsh glare of too much light

- and not the dim haze of too much dark

- but in the clarity of balance

- in that clarity

we can do our faithful best to choose life.

Choose life

I am inviting you,

Choose Life!

now that primary season is underway

- which means that election season is getting into full swing,

which means that we will be tried and tested,

we will be offered,

daily,

hourly,

the choice between life and death.

I am inviting you,

inviting all of us,

to choose life.

Choose Life!

Which means choosing our fellow children of God  
over our party affiliation.

Which means ideological purity can never be the test,  
but instead relationship is always the test,  
the test between life and death.

And here is a beginning;  
here is a way forward,  
a way we might begin to do this.

Arthur Schopenhauer, 19th century German philosopher wrote this,  
*The really proper address between one person and another  
should be, instead of Sir or Monsieur,  
should be instead: **my fellow sufferer.***

*However strange this may sound,  
it accords with the facts,  
puts the other person in the most correct light,  
and reminds us of that most necessary thing,  
tolerance,  
patience,  
forbearance,  
and love of one's neighbor,  
which everyone needs  
and each of us therefore  
owes to one another.<sup>1</sup>*

How can we see one another in the correct light?  
By acknowledging the darkness all around.  
By acknowledging their darkness  
and our own.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer. Parega and Paralipomena. (1851)

Which is exactly what God did for every one of us.

*In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.*

*He was in the beginning with God.*

*All things came into being through him,  
and without him not one thing came into being.  
What has come into being in him was life,  
and the life was the light of all people.*

*The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness did not overcome it.*

The light shines  
...in the darkness.

My fellow sufferers  
- the light shines.