

## Pericope Study for Sunday, September 4, 2016 – Lectionary 23C

Presented Tue 8/30/16 by Richard Burgess

### Collect / Prayer of the Day

Direct us, O Lord God, in all our doings with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. (ELW)

### Thought Questions for Lectionary 23C:

- Prioritize life, prosperity, eternal life, freedom, and discipleship relative to each other.
- What factors influence your ability to choose life, prosperity, eternal life, freedom, and discipleship? Is it actually possible to choose?
- In Deuteronomy 25 we are asked to choose between “life and prosperity, death and adversity”. In Luke 14 we are asked to choose between family and discipleship and between possessions and discipleship. Are these choices the same? Do the following equations work? How do they compare to the choices set forth and/or implied in Philemon?

Life = Prosperity = Discipleship

Death = Adversity = Family = Possessions

### Possible Sermon Titles for Lectionary 23C

As usual, use at your own risk.

	<b>Dt</b>	<b>Phm</b>	<b>Lk</b>
Life or Death – It’s Your Choice	X		
So You Might Live in the Land	X		
That You Might Not Perish	X		
Are You Useless or Useful? To Whom? For What?		X	
Slave, Brother, Child, or Partner?		X	
Slavery – Alive and Well in America?		X	
Who’s the Slave Here?		X	
Are You Worthy?			X
Discipleship or Your Possessions – It’s Your Choice			X
Do You Carry Your Cross or Jesus’?			X
Give Up All Your Possessions and Follow Jesus			X
Hate Your Family and Follow Jesus			X
How Does Jesus Feel about How You Feel about Your Family?			X
Jesus Turned			X
Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus			X
Choose	X	X	X
Who Owns You?	X	X	X

## Deuteronomy 25.15–20

<sup>15</sup>See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

## Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

25.15, 19 *I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity . . . Choose life . . .* Why would anyone choose “death and adversity”? Does anyone actually do that?

25.17 *But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish;* What does it mean to “perish” in the 21<sup>st</sup>? How are perception and reality different for Christians? Is it different for non-Christians?

25.19 *Choose life . . . loving the Lord your God, obeying him and holding fast to him; for that means life to you . . .* What does this mean to us in our time? How does “obeying him, and holding fast to him” relate to justification by grace through faith?

25.20 *so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.* What does “the land . . .” mean to us in our time and place? What other metaphors might also speak to us?

## Philemon 1-21

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. <sup>7</sup>I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup>For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, <sup>9</sup>yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup>I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. <sup>13</sup>I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. <sup>15</sup>Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

<sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.

<sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

### Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

Is there any value in reading the whole book of Philemon? (3 more verses)

Does Paul actually advocate Onesimus be freed?

Slavery was different for the Greco-Roman world than it has been in our American history. What is gained and/or lost by going into that?

What is Paul's attitude toward slavery here? Likewise "brotherhood" (v 1, 7, 16, 20), "child" (v 10), "partner" (v 17).

Verses 8 *your duty*; 12 *him, that is, my own heart*; 14 *that your good deed might be voluntary*; 18 *If he has wronged you . . . charge that to my account*. Are these phrases manipulative?

Verses 11, 13 *useless, useful, of service* What is Paul getting at by this utilitarian language?

Slavery, bondage, de facto ownership, etc still exist in our time, both literally and figuratively. How do people hear this text in light of their histories, contexts, and stories?

What is going on here beneath and behind the presenting story of Paul mediating between a runaway slave and his master? Where is Christ in this book?

## Luke 14:25-33

<sup>25</sup>Now large crowds were traveling with [Jesus;] and he turned and said to them,  
<sup>26</sup>“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.”

## Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

14.25 Jesus *turned and said to them . . .*”  
What did Jesus *turn* from? To? Why?

14.26 *hate* Gk: *miseō* “to hate” This is often said to mean “love less” as opposed to the modern default hearing of “despise”.  
Accurate? How do you need to spin this, or not?

14.27 *carry the cross* How can we possibly “carry the cross” that Jesus died on? How might this be life giving? Meditate on that for a few minutes, or hours, or years.

14.27 *cannot be my disciple* What does it mean to (presumably) think oneself to be a disciple of Christ and yet be unable to do so? What are the consequences of that? What kind of motivation was Jesus trying to elicit from the “large crowds”?

14.29 *all who see it will begin to ridicule* Who are the “all who see it”? Remembering that Jesus is speaking in the context of a Klingon-like honor / shame culture, what are the consequences of this ridicule? In comparison to eternal life?

14.32 What are these *terms of peace*? How can we ask for them? Is this what “give up all your possessions” (14.33) is getting at?

14.33 *So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.* “So therefore” implies some kind of continuity with what precedes. What does giving up all your possessions have to do with what precedes in this passage? Do “family” (14.26) and “possessions” (14.33) form an inclusio? What does that mean?