

TEXT: ³² Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? ³³ Has any other people heard the voice of God^{al} speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? ³⁴ Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?... ³⁹ Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. ⁴⁰ Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's time for change! After the killing of George Lloyd in Minneapolis and the subsequent protests, rioting, looting and violence many are calling for change. But is it the kind of change God, the true God, the Triune God, is looking for? Jesus tells us the change that God is looking for in Luke 13:1-5: **¹Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them-do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."** God is looking for repentance, a turning back to him.

What we saw this past week in many of the cities of our country is what a world without God, faith in God, looks like. It wasn't pretty! Change is needed. Our country needs to get back to God.

Moses' words in our text were addressed to Israel at another time when change was needed, the same change we need now. Moses encouraged Israel,

"Today, Turn Your Heart to the Lord, the Triune God!"

1. Fear Him Only.
2. Love Him Only.
3. Serve Him Only

The book of Deuteronomy consists of three sermons of Moses after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness in preparation for the Israelites conquest of the Promised Land. The wandering was a chastisement for their fear and lack of trust in the Lord to go into the promised land and conquer it then. A new generation, unlike their parents and grandparents, needed to change. For success they needed to fear, love and serve the true God only, turning away from idols. To make these changes Moses reminds them of God's past acts of mercy. Our text is the conclusion of the first sermon in which Moses briefly summarized the History of God's people from Mt. Sinai to their arrival at the Jordan River. The final paragraph before our text contains a warning against idolatry. This leads into the main thought of our text: the Lord is the only true God.

Fear Him Only

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as you have, and lived? ³⁴ **Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?**

Remember how God wonderfully creates man and how after they fell into sin God mercifully did not give them what they deserved, death, eternal death, but instead promised them a Savior. Remember how he chose your ancestor Abraham to fulfill his promise of a Savior. Remember how God powerfully delivered Abraham's children from the slavery of Egypt with powerful miracles (plagues and opening up the Red Sea). Remember how God spoke to you from Mt. Sinai and made a covenant with you. Remember how he punished your fathers after they worshipped the golden calf idol. The Lord is worthy of your fear and respect! Jesus once said, **"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both the soul and the body in hell."** (Mt.10:28) Fear Him Only!

But don't just fear and respect him because he can destroy you. Fear and respect Him only because he has saved you! Remember his promise to Abraham. **"Through you all nations of the earth will be blessed."** (Genesis 12:3) Christ Jesus fulfilled that promise. The Holy Spirit worked faith in your hearts to believe in that promise. Fear the Lord only, the true God only because of his great acts of mercy. He created you, redeemed you and sanctified you.

Change is needed today too. So many people do not respect God's authority or fear his almighty power. They do what they want to do without fear. But God can and will judge us and all people for their sins. It's not just those who murder that will be judged, but also those who do nothing to help their neighbor in every bodily need. It's not just those who steal and destroy a person's possessions, but also those who do not lift a finger to help their neighbor to improve and protect their property and business. God will judge not just those who reject him and his authority but also those who disrespect those whom God has put into authority in our world,

Change happens when we fear God's anger (preaching the law) and see what God has done to save us (preaching the gospel). Change happens when we hear that **"while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."** What changes do you and I need to make in our lives now that reflects a faith that fears Him only. Change happens when we remember how God has mercifully dealt with us despite our sins and the punishment we deserve for those sins. Remembering that leads us to

Love Him Only

Israel had great reason to love the Lord only. Their idols had never done anything for them! It was the Lord that heard their cries in Egypt and rescued them from slavery!

We love the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit only, because he has saved us from the slavery of sin! The Father planned our salvation. **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16) The Son willingly carried out the plan of salvation by living a perfect life for us and by sacrificing his life on the cross for us for the forgiveness of our sins. **"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."** His love changes us. We love because he first loved us. Jesus says, **"You are my friends if you do what I command."** (John 15:13, 14)

The Holy Spirit calls us to faith by the gospel. **"No one can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."** He then enlightens us to see how great is God's love for us in Christ, enlightens us to see what God's will is and then he sanctifies us, that is, he empowers us to fulfill the Lord's will, to make changes in our life.

It's time for change! Love the Lord only! Love is what we do in faith according to God's will in thanksgiving for what God has done for us, doing it for God's glory. We love when we respect God's will. Love is when we let our light shine, we act according to God's will that others will see his glory. Love is not just getting emotional and acting on our emotions. Love is when we act on God's love and will emotionally. We don't love when we seek vengeance. We love when we let God carry out vengeance. We love when we respect authority. They are God's servants to do us good. (Romans 13:1-9)

Serve Him Only

And speaking of serving, all of us are God's servants. We have been called to faith to be his servants! Moses reminds the Children of Israel and us to serve the Lord only! ³⁹ **Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.** ⁴⁰ **Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.**

Note first of all what the true God has done so that we can serve Him. The Father has equipped us with gifts to serve Him. The love of Jesus motivates us to serve Him. Through faith in the Son our service is accepted by the Father even though it may not be perfect. The Holy Spirit leads us to see what God wants us to do, helps us pray that the Lord's will be done and produces the fruits of faith in us. These fruits of faith are a manifestation of the change that the Holy Spirit has worked in us, change that leads to peace and unity both in the church and in our world, change that is blessed by God. Paul describes that change in Galatians 5: **19 "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.**

This is the change Moses was encouraging in the nation of Israel at the west side of the Jordan 3500 years ago. This is the change our country needs today! May God bless our work as a church so that our nation once again returns to the true God, the Triune God, and fears, loves and serves him only. Such change will be blessed by God. Amen.