

**“The LORD Heard Our Call”  
Deuteronomy 26:1-11  
Pollocksville Presyterian Church  
10.17.21  
Sermon #117**

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**26** Once you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you take possession of it and are settled there, **2** take some of the early produce of the fertile ground that you have harvested from the land the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket. Then go to the location the Lord your God selects for his name to reside. **3** Go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him: “I am declaring right now before the Lord my God that I have indeed arrived in the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.”

**4** The priest will then take the basket from you and place it before the Lord your God's altar.**5** Then you should solemnly state before the Lord your God:

"My father was a starving Aramean. He went down to Egypt, living as an immigrant there with few family members, but that is where he became a great nation, mighty and numerous.**6** The Egyptians treated us terribly, oppressing us and forcing hard labor on us. **7** So we cried out for help to the Lord, our ancestors' God. The Lord heard our call. God saw our misery, our trouble, and our oppression. **8** The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with awesome power, and with signs and wonders. **9** He brought us to this place and gave us this land—a land full of milk and honey. **10** So now I am bringing the early produce of the fertile ground that you, Lord, have given me."

Set the produce before the Lord your God, bowing down before the Lord your God. **11** Then celebrate all the good things the Lord your God has done for you and your family—each one of you along with the Levites and the immigrants who are among you.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God.**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Deuteronomy is a fascinating book. It's the last of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Its name means "second law".

That is not to say that this “second law” replaces the original covenant between the LORD and the Hebrews. It is a reiteration.....an explanation of the covenant between God and the chosen people.

Deuteronomy connects so much of both testaments of the Bible.

King Josiah in 2 Kings 22-23 instituted many reforms in the Southern Kingdom of Judah because he found a scroll in the temple believed to be something that resembles Deuteronomy.

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy a lot, especially in Matthew 4 when he is tempted by Satan. Paul also quotes Deuteronomy in Galatians 3.

Deuteronomy consists of three speeches by Moses. Today's passage of Deuteronomy 26:1-11 comes at the tail end of the second speech, which starts in chapter 4:44 and ends in 28:68.

Throughout these verses, Moses restates the Ten Commandments and provides commentary on them. Today's verses help flesh out the 10th Commandment: Don't covet anything belonging to your neighbor.

Now, these 11 verses are the last of three different passages on coveting neighbor's property, starting in Deuteronomy 25:13. There are warnings of taking advantage of others through dishonest business practices as well as making gains through someone else's vulnerability. And there's today's scripture which talks about making an offering out of a grateful response to God's compassion

and care. One commentator says that these 11 verses focus on the “positive implications of the commandment against coveting” someone else’s property.<sup>1</sup>

Now, I get it.....reading through Deuteronomy and portions of the other first five books of the Bible, starting with Genesis, seeing these rules and procedures can be daunting. Or maybe you go crosseyed trying to make sense of all of this.

*Once you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you  
as an inheritance.....take some of the early produce....*

*Go to the location the LORD your God selects.....*

*Declare to the priest....*

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<sup>1</sup> Mark E. Biddle. *Deuteronomy*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003. p.380.

*The priest will take the basket from you....*

*Then solemnly state the following....*

Yes, I get it. It's quite the ritual. Yet, there is something that can get missed if we are not carefully looking. Really, it's staring us right in the face. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 consists of a confession of faith. A confession of faith. A sworn testimony to the LORD's work. A call to remembrance of the past.

Yes, of course, there are negative consequences to not following the commandments of the LORD **AND** there are positive consequences to this commandment. It is a grateful response of thankfulness. Thankfulness to God for the work done in the past, present, and future.

This statement of faith is honest. It doesn't mince words.....it tells the truth of what happened. This statement of faith is a recount of the past and the reason why the people are to lay their firstfruits before the altar.

The Hebrews came from wandering and starving immigrants. Their father, Jacob, took refuge in Egypt. They grew in number. Then a pharaoh came to power who didn't know Jacob nor his son, Joseph, and made the Hebrews slaves in Egypt. Then, the Hebrews cried out to their ancestors' God and God heard their call. God saw their suffering.....God saw their trouble.....God saw their oppression. And not by their own might, but because of the LORD's power they were delivered out of bondage.....and after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, they were home. A home full



of milk and honey. A home full of everything they needed to thrive. A home where they could give back a portion of what God had given them.

This bold statement of faith attests to the LORD's work in history and in the present and looks toward the LORD's work in the future. A people who were starving immigrants, slaves in Egypt, and wanderers in the desert are living in the realized promise of the LORD: The Promised Land. And it is in the Promised Land that the Hebrews respond with a spirit of abundance and thankfulness to the LORD's work in their lives.

It's easy to focus on the rules associated in this passage: "Take some of the early produce....place it before the altar.....go to the

priest.” And those rules are important. But, the statement of faith speaks louder. This statement of faith witnesses to God’s love and compassion for a vulnerable people. It also attests to the present work of God in their lives, most notably as the realization of the Promised Land. And this statement of faith testifies to the future, especially in verse 11:

*Then celebrate all the good things the LORD your God has done for you and your family—each one of you along with the Levites and the immigrants who are among you.*

“Each one of you along with the Levites and the immigrants who are among you.” Those words denote insider and outsider.....and yet, the outsider won’t be an outsider forever. You have the Priests....the Levites....who are powerful leaders among the

Hebrews. And you have the immigrants. Those who are passing by or maybe making their permanent home among the Hebrews. All good things come from the LORD. And the LORD shows goodness to insiders and outsiders. The LORD's mercy and compassion is not limited, but is demonstrated in ways and to people we haven't been able to imagine.

While Levites means the group of people who are priests, it also points to the Hebrews as a priestly and holy people, set apart from other nations. The word immigrants carries meaning, too. Part of the Hebrews' journey is that of immigrants, sojourners, and wanderers. In this statement of faith, they recognize their uniqueness and holiness in the world because of God and they are reminded of their past as immigrants.

That is why they are to give their firstfruits. They affirm God's work in the past, present, and future.

And in our lives, when we give a portion of what God has given to us, whether it is time, talents, or money, it is not because we feel like it or because we are the masters of our destiny, it goes back to this scripture, Deuteronomy 26:1-11. The Hebrews' story is our history. Our spiritual ancestors were starving immigrants who made Egypt their home. They were held captive. They were rescued. They were led to the Promised Land. And since the Hebrews' arrival in the Promised Land, the LORD continued to work through Judges, Kings, Prophets, and the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. The LORD poured out for us the gift of the Holy Spirit and the

church grew. The LORD continued to work through the early church, the reformers, the Presbyterians in colonial America, and 153 years ago when Pollocksville Presbyterian Church was started. And the LORD continued to work since that time....and here we are today.....thousands of years after this passage from Deuteronomy.

Beloved in Christ, that is why we give. This statement of faith in Deuteronomy points to God's work in the world that continues today. We give because we are responding out of thankfulness ...thankfulness that all good things come from the LORD. We have been given so much and may we remain thankful to God for the abundant resources we have been given.

Friends, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.