



Lenten Reflection for Thursday, March 3rd

Alice Avouris

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

Deuteronomy 30:15 - 20

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 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. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 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. 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, 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.

Remember how you felt when a parent sat you down and read you the riot act? Maybe you knew you had done something wrong, or maybe you had no clue. Either way, these are powerful memories, and mine were a long time ago. I was not even a very naughty child; one of four, I decided early on it was better to leave the scene if anything controversial was going on with my siblings. It's probably pretty universal that the early experience of an irate parent creates fear (first) and then possibly anger. No wonder these feelings have so much power – anger at a parent?! Ideally, with a little maturity, more civilized responses of embarrassment, shame and remorse are felt. Reconciliation in the form of hugs follows soon after. This is the ideal scenario for a parent who is trying to show a child how to grow up, assuming of course that the parent is a grownup him or herself.

This passage from Deuteronomy is a bit like that. The Hebrews, like clueless young children, attended a golden calf party, were caught, and given an ultimatum. I'm not very good at Bible, but that party was way back in Exodus, I think, and Deuteronomy is several books past that. Now I need to apologize for my irreverence, and acknowledge that the passage above does not show an irate father God, but a patient, loving parent, who gave the Hebrews many, many opportunities to get their priorities straight, and we are still working on it.

As adults, these early memories of butting heads with our most beloved authority figures, Mom and Dad, come out of the recesses of our minds, nagging at us, demanding our attention. And not just our childhood mistakes, made really in innocence, but poor choices we made as adults, for which we have sincere, intellectual regret. We long to have done things differently; we miss the advice our parents could give us if they were still around. If only we could have spent more time talking and listening. Fortunately, these uncomfortable memories that never entirely go away are opportunities to connect with our parents and our past for understanding and healing. Remembering our mistakes, we can give them the attention they demand, but not let them become more important than our actions in the here and now. Deuteronomy offered life, full of blessings. The Savior of the New Testament promises this. With the knowledge of our mistakes, and this life-restoring gift of forgiveness, we are free to enter the Promised Land.



Alice Avouris lives with her husband around the corner from Church of the Holy Apostles. They retired and moved to Brooklyn when their granddaughter was born. She started attending in January, 2019, after a fun time caroling in December. She loves jogging around the park and birdwatching there in the spring. Recently she started performing music by phone to hospice patients through the Visiting Nurses Association of NY.