

DEUTERONOMY 30:11-20  
HELLO LIFE!

Let me take you back 10 years, to the building site that has become Woodhall Millbrae. I decided to follow the building of these houses with my camera; you never know when pictures might come in useful! Today is one of these days! I was taken by their advertising campaign: when the houses were nearly finished, some boards appeared, there is the picture of one on the screen. There were four of them altogether and the one on the screen says "Welcome. Birdsong. Squashed leaves, broken twigs. Afternoon dawdles. Crisp clean air. Reflection. A haven surrounds you. And you belong... Hello Life" Then underneath it says "Marketing suite this way." That board is not marketing a house; it is marketing a lifestyle; it says nothing about the house you might buy, but it advertises the houses by asking you to make a lifestyle choice. Others invite you to "listen... feel...expect..." and to be fair, two of them do tell you something about the houses themselves. If you want to see how this works, visit the Juniper Water website, which is not a drink, but is the development of houses that are being built on the Splash Bathrooms site; it speaks to you about "A life-experience and a life-style... This unique development will enhance your quality of life as it provides the perfect retreat for body, mind and spirit." Again, they are marketing not a house but a life-style, though you'll find lots about the houses there too. Has it worked? You'll need to ask the people who live in the Millbrae!

When I saw this advertising campaign, my first instinct was to say "they're using our language!" "Hello Life" is gospel language. Christian faith is life, is a life-experience. Christian faith is more than doing the right religious thing on a Sunday; it is life and about living by faith every day of the week. Jesus was talking about something deeper and more valuable when He talked about coming to bring life and that's our gospel language. It fascinates me that advertisers should want to use that life-style language when trying to sell something like a house; can a house shape your lifestyle? Most people will tell you today that they want a good life, a quality life, a life with values. We'd say that, wouldn't we! Christian faith is the best life-experience, with the best and deepest values; this is something personal to each of us, because we come to see that life in different ways; but there is also something of shared values, that we share this life together, as a community of people for all of whom Jesus has done the same thing, He has given us life!

We're on the plains of Moab, just East of the Dead Sea, around the place where the Jordan river enters the Dead Sea. We're camped. We've pitched our tents after nearly 40 years of wandering, guided by God, led by Moses. We've stopped and we're nearly at the Promised Land; we can see the Promised Land across the river, almost touch it, it is within reach; journey's end. Moses has taken time to remind us of what God has promised and of some of the things that God has done and said. Deuteronomy is a reminder to the people of Israel of the covenant that God made with them when they left Egypt some 40 years before, a reminder of the ways in which God has led them through the desert. "Do you remember that God said... Do you remember when God did...?" By doing that, Moses is inviting them also to remember their commitment to love God; what matters to Moses is that the people remember to love the Lord and serve Him all days of their life. Deuteronomy is Moses talking to the people, a series of speeches, to take them back to their first love, to love the Lord; comes to this climax in chapter 30 when he presents them with a choice. There are two ways to go: which life-style choice will you make? Will you love the Lord or not?

Looked at choices earlier, so now I want to look at life. "Hello, life". But what is this life of which Moses speaks? What is it like? What does it mean? Why does it matter?

I meet people who tell me that they're not religious; one day I'll have courage to say "good; neither am I!" I'm not selling a religion in my preaching or my ministry; I'm offering a lifestyle. There is a way of seeing Christianity as a religion to follow and that to be a Christian means to be religious and to come to church and do other 'religious things'. But Christian faith is not about being religious; Christian faith is a life-experience. You don't have to travel to the other side of the world to find this life-experience, or to find yourself, as some try. "*What I...*" (*Deuteronomy 30:11ff*) It is here; it is around us; it is to be found in your heart with God. The Gospel is really quite simple: Jesus loves us and gives us life in all its fullness. Karl Barth, one of the hardest theologians to read, summed up Christian faith as "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so." That is it! We don't need to go up to heaven to find it; you don't need to go round the world to find yourself; it is a simple offer and promise from God, that He loves us and gives us life. It is a life-experience of grace here and now; it is a promise of life-experience of glory in heaven.

Twice Moses tells us what this life means for us: "*I command...*" (*Deuteronomy 30:16a*); "*you may...*" (*Deuteronomy 30:20*) Two ways of saying the same thing: life is a relationship with God. "Love the Lord" is the language of relationship, of valuing someone, of caring about someone, about holding someone dear in your heart. That is our relationship with God: we learn to care about God, to hold God dear in our hearts, to value Him. Because we love the Lord, we learn to walk with Him, to obey Him, to listen to Him, to hold fast to Him. He means something to us. This is a relationship that is deep and profound and is quite different from a religion that creates the attitude of "What do I have to do?" This is life lived in relationship with God; He loves us and we love Him; He cares for us and we rejoice in His love for us; He is always with us and we learn to walk in His ways.

Why does this matter? There is a clear sense of two outcomes to these two choices. "Hello life" opens up a whole treasure-store of God's blessing on us; choosing to say no to God, opens up a terrible set of words about death and destruction. This kind of language is not popular today; we don't speak too much these words of death, judgement and destruction, yet Jesus Himself said some of the hardest words we find in the Bible. He spoke of two roads, two gates, two men building houses and each of these pictures has a choice, one heading for life, the other for death. For Moses, those who chose not to love God would not live long in the land; they would cross the Jordan, but their prosperity would not be long. Those who chose life would be prosperous and the whole of God's blessing would be poured out on them. People are making lots of lifestyle choices today and we look and wonder what will be the outcome of these choices. The most profound choice is to ignore God and forget about Him – what will the outcome of that be for our society?

There are five words at the end that sum all of this up: "*The Lord is your life.*" (*Deuteronomy 30:20*) We hear it said about people: football was his life; she lived for her grandchildren. What does that mean? It means that life revolved around football, or the grandchildren; these things came first and everything and everyone else had to fit round about them. *The Lord is your life* does far more for us, in two ways. First of all, *The Lord is your life* tells us of what God brings to our life-experience. God is not only giver of life, but He is our life. This is far more than a lifestyle choice or a life-experience that is on offer here; it is God Himself to know; it is God Himself to love. The Lord is our life. Jesus said: "*I have...*" (*John 10:10*) The irony is that it was in His death and then His resurrection that He gave us life and that He became our life. Life is about breathing and eating, but it is also about loving and believing, and it is this loving and believing that is completed by Jesus. To know God is to know life in all its fullness, completely. Moses was speaking to Israel, a people; but Moses uses the singular 'you', speaking to them as each individual. The Lord is my life, your life,

something individual as a choice; but this is also something we share, that binds us together in the community of faith, as people for whom and in whom Jesus has done the same thing; for all of us He becomes our life, gives us life and pours the whole treasure-store of the blessing of God into our lives. This is who we are; the people for whom the Lord is our life.

There is a challenge: to make that the reality of our lives. "Hello Life!" means what for us? A nice house to call home matters to us, but... A happy family is a good thing to have, but... A good fulfilling job is a good thing, but... Supporting best football team in land makes us happy but... How can it be said of us "*The Lord is our life*"? How can it work, that with all of these good things around us, at the centre of them all and giving shape to all of them, stands the love of the Lord Jesus for us, our love for the Lord Jesus, and for that to be an undying love? This is to take nothing away from the importance of family life, or a satisfying job, or the time we spend making a nice house into something we call home, but it matters more than any of these, it gives life lasting, ultimate value, to say *The Lord is our life*; Jesus stands at the centre, gives life its meaning and purpose; He gives life its value and shape. Love the Lord, walk in His ways, keep His commands, listen to his voice, hold fast to Him.

*The Lord is your life* – can that be said of us? We are the people whom God has blessed and given us life, so yes, it can be said of us. A people who love God – that's the challenge!