

The 5th Sunday after Pentecost
“Receiving Jesus and finding life!” Matthew 10:39-40
July 2, 2023
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 5th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 10:39-40

“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

Here ends our text.

According to God’s Word, all of humanity can be divided into two groups of people – losers and finders. There is no middle ground or third group. And when Jesus talks about the losers, He is speaking about an ultimate loss, a loss that cannot be recovered. He is speaking in the most profound sense of an eternal loss. He’s speaking not of a temporary loss of money in the stock market or your home in a flood or hurricane, or your favorite sports team losing a game. No, Jesus is talking about the soul whether it is lost eternally or found eternally.

This is how serious Jesus speaks to His apostles and to us as He sends them out on His mission to find the losers and proclaim to them the Kingdom of Heaven, before it’s too late! Jesus sends out His apostles and He sends us out as well to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, one might confess one’s sins, lose one’s life, deny one’s corrupt life, receive forgiveness in Jesus, for Jesus’ sake alone, and receive true life in Him!

And when that happens life is found! True life in Jesus. New life! Eternal life!

The children had a super Summer Camp this week at Immanuel. We began each day with singing, a Bible story, studying the Ten Commandments, and prayer. On the first day of the camp, the children learned the 1st commandment – “You shall have no other gods before Me.” What does this mean? Luther explains: “You shall fear, love and trust in God above all things.”

Above all things...above anything or anyone that we would put our trust in or seek to find our peace and contentment in. For true peace, contentment and happiness can only be found in the One True God. Receiving Jesus, you receive the Father. You receive the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So, we began each day in the name of the Triune God and received His three-fold benediction of the Father's blessing and keeping, the Son's gracious shining of His love upon you, and the Holy Spirit's giving of the gifts of His favor and true peace!

In the one true God alone is only where life can be found. All of man's efforts and journeys to find life in anything but Jesus will fail. Only when God in His gracious love finds you through the sending out of His laborers into the harvest, and reveals to you His salvation so that you repent of all that you prop up as good and worthy in your life and fall upon Jesus mercy do you truly find life.

And when that happens by the gracious favor of the Holy Spirit, peace fills one's soul and one gladly confesses Jesus before men where true life is found.

This we heard last week, as you remember, in the final verse of our Gospel reading in Matthew 10:32, the verse right before today's reading. I'll read it for you again.

“32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

Again there are only two groups of people, the deniers and the confessors, the losers of eternal life and the finders of eternal life through Jesus alone!

That's why it shouldn't surprise us to hear Jesus say that He comes with the sword. **“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”**

The sword brings division. It divides all into two camps of people – those who fear and trust in God above all things, and those who don't. Jesus didn't come to establish an earthly peace and remove all strife on this earth. There will never be a utopia on this earth, never be a world peace, never be the ending of poverty, hunger, wars, triple digit heat, floods, tornadoes, and evil in this world.

In fact, the devil is roaming like a lion seeking whom he may devour. He is always tempting people to find their sole life's contentment in the riches of this world. And by doing so, they end up losing their lives eternally by denying Jesus who gives true peace through the forgiveness of sins.

A foundational Bible story which begins the Pentecost season in the one-year series is the story of the rich man and Lazarus, in Luke 16. The rich man by all human standards had made it. He had found the American dream. He had fine clothing, fine food, great parties while the poor beggar outside his palace had nothing. Lazarus only hoped to receive a few crumbs from the rich man. Both died for no one cannot keep one's earthly life forever. One will eventually lose it and then what?

The rich man is found in torment in hell for he had received "his good things", not Jesus' good things. He had denied Jesus. And so He was denied eternally. He was an eternal loser, pleading that Lazarus would give him a little water for his burning tongue, but no one can cross the abyss.

Lazarus on the other hand had appeared to lose life, had nothing but sores which the dogs licked, but yet he was a confessor of Jesus. He had taken up his cross and followed Jesus even though his life was tremendously painful and difficult. But in the end, Jesus confessed him and he found life in Abraham's bosom, with the all the believers in heaven.

"I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." (Luke 16:27-28)

What was Abraham's answer? **"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."** They have the Word of God that gives life, true life in Jesus, for Jesus' sake alone.

Jesus said in John 8:

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!"

A most difficult thing in this life is when the truth sets one free and yet there are others in one's family or circle of friends who are not free. They are still trying to find life on their own terms. You may be ridiculed for following Jesus, for coming to His house of worship often, for telling others where true life is found – in Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Him!

You will endure the cross of those who swear at you, seek to overthrow the work that you do to share the Word of God. The Word of God, as a sword, divides and reveals where one's heart truly is. It was revealed during summer camp. Some confessed Jesus and others opposed Him.

Those who confess Jesus will respond in love with even the smallest of gifts, a cup of water on a hot day. Those who receive you as one who shares God's Word, a prophet, receive Jesus. For all Christians are prophets, priests and kings. We have all been sent to the lost, those who think they have found their lives in this world but truly lost. We are sent proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It's here. Trust in Jesus and you will find life. Trust in this world and you will lose your life...eternally.

“One thing you lack:” Jesus said to another rich man. **“Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”** (Mark 10:21)

“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

The Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the world says to all, **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”**

There's a saying which the world goes by, “Finders keepers, losers weepers.” Find earthly treasures by your own strength and power and you're a winner, a keeper. If you don't strive after the treasures of this world and don't amass them, you're a loser and a weeper.

Jesus turns this upside down, doesn't He, in today's Gospel.

Finders weepers, losers keepers. Find your life on your own worldly terms and you will lose it and weep eternally. Lose your life, deny your life, admit that your life is

sinful, repent and receive Jesus by faith and you will find your life. No more weeping. Even the persecution of this world as you carry your cross and follow Jesus are turned into joys. For you have found true peace in the Prince of Peace, in the One who came to give His good will and peace through the Gospel to men on earth. So sang the angels at Jesus' birth. And so said Jesus at His resurrection. "Peace be with you" as He showed His outstretched nail marked hands.

Jesus indeed went to battle with the sword of His Word of Truth and conquered all evil, death, the devil and sin.

This Word, Moses and the Prophets we have and through it we are kept strong to confess Jesus. So Martin Luther wrote in the final stanza of "A Mighty Fortress".

"The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
Though these all be gone,
Our vict'ry has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth."

Amen.

"The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)