

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

When Cynthia and I moved to Cook, it was our 14th move. Now I long since learned that the best thing I can do when we (Cynthia) are preparing for a move, is to get out of the way when the time for packing starts. I am best off if I basically move aside and let her pack, I'll do the heavy lifting, and move boxes once they are packed. Same thing applies when we get to wherever we are going. Get out of the way, do the heavy lifting, let Cynthia unpack. Otherwise I am a stumbling block in the way she does her unpacking.

So how about if we do a little unpacking together this morning. "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Knowing that our church is built on the foundation of that confession of faith, last Sunday we asked the question "who does your life say that Jesus is?" We know what we confess; that Jesus redeemed us, that he has freed us from all sins, from death and the power of the devil, that he did so with his holy, precious blood, his innocent sufferings and death. We confessed that he did this that we may belong to him, live under him, serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence and blessedness. In other words, we confessed that he is our life and our salvation.

Now this morning, Jesus tells us about life and salvation. Our lives and our salvation. You might say he unpacks this for us this morning.

Peter inspired by the Father has confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now he and the rest of the disciples hear Jesus say he is going to suffer and be killed, and be raised on the third day. Peter reacts, taking Jesus aside, saying "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." A very human reaction as you might say yourself upon hearing your friend, teacher, mentor, is going to suffer and be killed. A very human reaction that Satan uses to try to tempt Jesus to take another path, to take the easy way out and not go the way of the cross. And Jesus knows that this is another temptation akin to the temptations in the wilderness, it's a snare, a trap that Jesus repudiates with strong words "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." As I said, Peter has a very human reaction, but that's not what Jesus wants because Jesus knows Peter has been inspired by the Father, that Peter now knows Jesus is the Christ so it's time Peter begins to think about what he has seen, what he has have been taught. This Christ, this Messiah is not seeking glory in this life, but instead came to serve, to heal, to teach, to love, to do the unexpected reaching out to the undesirables, those cast off by the world.

Consider that Satan sustains the life of the world and looking at things from a worldly perspective blocks the life and salvations Jesus brings. Jesus continues to unpack, he does some heavy lifting. We see a cross laid over and into our lives, one for each of us. Jesus tells us that to be his followers we must deny ourselves, taking up the cross, dying to sin and the world, receiving the life given us in our baptisms. In effect we must put to death on the cross a worldly way of life, the values of the world that we have been inculcated in and so often embraced. To save our lives we

must lose our self-centered lives, a contrast with the ways of the world that where grasping more is the way of life. Losing our lives for Jesus' sake means finding our lives, a contrast with the world where we lose nothing, give nothing, only acquire more and more, and in the end have nothing, not even life.

So what does it mean to lose our lives for Jesus' sake and thereby find our lives? It means to put away self-centeredness, put away living for the sake of acquiring, to put away selfishness, to put these things away, put them to death. Instead we live for Christ, for his sake, for the sake of his people.

Jesus encourages and reassures his disciples, pointing to his resurrection and ascension and his return at the end of time. He will come again, as we confess every Sunday. Then Jesus points to his coming crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, to Pentecost, to the sending of the Spirit, the gospel and the growth of the church, all of which occur before his disciples die.

And this my friends, has a direct impact on your life today, right now and continuing for the rest of your lives. The cross of Christ was traced on your forehead when you were baptized, you were marked with the cross of Christ forever. This is more than just symbolic, it is not just a nice touch in our baptism service. It was done to you, it is done to all who are baptized, because the person baptized dies to the life of the world and is reborn a child of God, raised to new life with Christ Jesus, rebirth. A death and new life that happens daily. I admit that I do not watch much television and have not watched it for many years now, but I keep up with what is going on through internet and news reports. Reality shows and nifty attractive folks without an outward blemish, but who are apparently empty inside laugh at the idea of such a marking. The world claims that there is no sense or hope or purpose in such a marking. We who are baptized however, realize and recognize that the world is dead wrong.

The cross of Christ gives us strength, it gives us hope and it gives us love. It reminds us that our pride, which we love even now, our arrogance, our concerns and fears, all that which the world embraces and encourages, are wiped out by the anger of the Messiah. Marked with the cross of Christ, we do not hear the world, we pay no attention to the gods of this world, marked with the cross of Christ we recognize affliction, suffering and injustice all perpetrated by the values of this world's gods. Marked with the cross of Christ we rise with the Lord to a new life, drawn into new lives as our old lives are put aside, put to death. Marked with the cross of Christ we are free to live in the world but not of the world, not owned by the world, not trapped by the world and its false values. We realize that all that which blesses our lives is not because of something we have done but because of what Jesus has done for us! The Son rose on the third day and we ourselves rise with the Son every day of our lives and we see the brightness and blessings bestowed upon us. Jesus would like us to move from the things that bind and blind us, that hold us hostage. He is willing to do the unpacking, because the truth is that only Jesus' cross-bearing can empower our cross-bearing. Only his death enables us to lose our lives for his sake,

to die to sin, self, and selfishness. Only in his resurrection do we find life, here and hereafter. Our faith is not comfortable and complacent, anything but, Christ bids us take up our crosses and follow him, and there is a cross for each one of us. AMEN