

Lose Life to Find Life

† Recognize the reality (vv.34-36)

† Love Jesus first (vv.37-39)

† Anticipate rewards (vv.40-42)

In the name of Jesus, the Lord of our Life, the Savior of our souls, dearly redeemed disciples:

*We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.*¹

In a few weeks we celebrate Independence Day. Sadly, many Americans ignore the prominence of God, “the Supreme Judge,” in our founding documents and in the blood shed by our founding fathers. Many lost their lives, families and their fortunes. In one case a Declaration signer agreed to the bombardment of his own home because the British were using it as headquarters. There was no American Family or State Farm Insurance to file a claim. How much more for Christians rejected by the world as rebels and outcasts is our Lord’s lesson true for us today: **Lose Life to Find Life.** First,...

† Recognize the reality (vv.34-36)

The Lord of the Church is giving instructions to His Twelve Disciples on their first missionary journey. Last Sunday (10:24-33), Jesus pointed out the honor of receiving ridicule as He did for serving. We too will be called the devil’s names by religious people condemning sound doctrine. But in all opposition we are not afraid because our souls and bodies are safe with God for time and eternity. Our heavenly Father cares for little birds and even more for us day by day. God even knows the hairs of our head, cradle to grave. As Church Father Augustine put it, “God loves each of us as if there were no one else to love.” And in all of this intimate knowledge and faithful care God never “grows tired or weary.”

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:28-31)

As we confess our faith in God’s goodness and grace, we would love to enjoy peace and tranquility. Isn’t Jesus “***the Prince of Peace***” (Isaiah 9:6)? And didn’t the angels sing at His birth, “***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men***” (Luke 2:14 KJV)? Then why does Jesus say this? “***Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’***” Some of His apostles found out when they proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ in distant lands. If a queen converted, her king was likely to kill the messenger for stealing the heart of his wife for

¹ "Declaration of Independence," *Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corp. All rights reserved.

Jesus. **Recognize the reality** today. In nearly every Christian family strife and discord come from those who refuse to follow Christ even when you love them for Jesus' sake. **Lose Life to Find Life**, but ...

✠ **Love Jesus first** (vv.37-39)

More startling, Jesus says: *“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* The Greek word here is not αγαπη-love, but the *love of friendship* (φιλεω), the blood and background which draw families together. Yet Jesus warns if our hearts go first to family instead of Him: *“not worthy of me...not worthy of me....”* Likewise, if comfort is more valuable to us than the cross, *“...not worthy of me....”* In family and fortune we must **Lose Life to Find Life**.

We are still blessed by leaders who bore Christ's cross in the past. Remember, this is not sickness, storms, financial, marital problems suffered also by non-Christians. The Christian **“cross”** is what we suffer for being a Christian, like pointing out doctrinal errors according to God's Word in “polemics.” C.F.W. Walther, founder of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod remarked in the 1800's: “Polemics holds no joy at all for us. Yes, the fact that polemics is necessary is something we bear as a cross....As Luther said in opposition to the Sacramentarians..., ‘As much as we feel our Old Adam we are unfortunately inclined to make peace with all people despite any doctrinal differences. And that is especially with every person we lovingly regard as a believer. But we are imprisoned. We cannot escape. There the text is too powerful. It won't let itself be torn away from its meaning by mere wordplay.’”²

The Missouri Synod's love of **Jesus first** helped our Wisconsin Synod, so that the second WELS President Bading and theologian Adolph Hoenecke told their brethren, “We are rightly accused of unionism. We need to repent.” Loving **Jesus first**, the WELS joined the Synodical Conference with other like-minded Lutherans, including the LCMS. When the LCMS no longer held to her former clarity in fellowship, God's grace had already provided a place to hear and practice God's Word in its truth and purity. We pray God will help us **Love Jesus first** and be a blessing to future generations.

✠ **Anticipate rewards** (vv.40-42)

Does it make you uncomfortable to **Anticipate rewards**? Truly we do not deserve them as Jesus said to His disciples, *“So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”* (Luke 17:10) And yet the Holy Spirit assured Jewish Christians suffering persecution: *“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”* (Hebrews 6:10 NIV) God's generosity shows here in Matthew 10, by promising the *reward* of the *prophet* and of the *righteous man* for those who receive the *prophet, the righteous man* or young disciple in the reputation of faith.

Doesn't that take the pressure off? We don't have to do something spectacular to gain God's favor? “No,” Jesus says, “you already have God's full favor and pardon for sin because of me. So welcome those who come in my Name-reputation as Lord and Savior. Even tiny mercies to little kids are rewarded as done for me.” When we witness for Christ the pressure is off, fear gone. If people listen, they're really accepting Jesus and His Father who sent Him. If they refuse to accept His message, they're not rejecting us, but the Lord. Carrying the cross of Christ, we **Anticipate rewards** of grace.

Watch out for the tempting morsels of worldly pleasure and religion. Satan hunts Christians like the Inuit hunt polar bears. They sharpen a small bone on both ends and freeze it in tasty blubber somewhere in the bear's path. One bite, then every step is a killer from internal bleeding. Christ offers His body and blood in sacrifice for our sins, and His dear Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen our faith. **Lose Life to Find Life** everlasting in glory with God. Amen.

² C.F.W. Walther, quoting Luther. Trans. C. S. Doerr. *Wisc. Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 100, No. 3, Summer 2003, p.193.

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Martin Luther: “The high prerogative of heirship, Paul faithfully enjoins [in Romans 8:17], is dependent on a sacred duty. Let him who would be Christ’s brother, and joint-heir with him, remember he must also be a joint-martyr and joint-sufferer with Christ....Since Christ, our dear Lord and Savior, had to suffer before he could be glorified, we must be martyrs with him, with him be mocked by the world, despised, spit upon, crowned with thorns and put to death, before the inheritance will be ours. It cannot be otherwise....” ⁵

³ "Declaration of Independence," *Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corp. All rights reserved.

⁴ C.F.W. Walther with a nonreferenced quotation of Luther. “Forward to Volume 25 of *Lehre und Wehre* (January, 1879, pp.1-11), translated by Christopher S. Doerr. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 100, No. 3, Summer 2003, p.193.

⁵ *Sermons of Martin Luther*, a.k.a. “Luther’s Postil.” John Nicholas Lenker, ed. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, Romans 8:18-22. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. VIII, p. 97.

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