**Matthew 10:34-42 June 28, 2020 (Confirmation Day)**

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

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Matthew chapter 10 here re-reading these words. “And whoever 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.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Have you ever been told to “get a life”? Or perhaps you’ve been told that you have “no life.” To take these phrases literally would give the impression that you are some sort of ghost or zombie, so obviously we aren’t talking about a literal life in the sense of breathing, eating and drinking. We’re not talking about brain function and if our hearts are still beating. So what does it mean? Is it talking about social interactions? Is having a life simply having friends? Being involved in social groups and friend circles? What would it mean to have a life here in Onekama? That you own a boat? That you are part of the Portage Lake Assocation? That you go to the Manistee County Fair? The term is rather hard to nail down and define in our own world, but what does Jesus mean here in our Gospel lesson? “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Since life is a word that has different meanings, one being social acceptance, popularity, or being involved in your community, and the other meaning being alive as in not dead, let’s go to the Greek. This would be the original language that this text was written in, and there are certain words and phrases that don’t translate well into the English language. So what word does Matthew use in the citing of Jesus’ words? He uses the Greek word “Psuksay” This is significant because there isn’t just one word for life in the Greek, take for example John 14:6, the verse that was read this past Tuesday at the funeral service of Karen Brandt, “Jesus answers, I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” Is this the same word? No! This is the word “Dzoay” “Dzoay” is more of a reference to vitality, and breathing, and having a heart beat and brain function. Jesus is saying He is the one who is the life of all living, he is the death of death, we sing these words in the great Lent hymn, “Christ the life of all the living” this would be a “Dzoay” way of seeing the word life.

So what in the world is going on here? “Whoever finds his “psuksay” life will lose it, and whoever loses his “psuksay” life for my sake will find it.” That’s right, the Greek does not bail us out, it is the same identical “pusksay” word in the Greek for each life, in this verse. The first definition of this word is “breath”, which is vital for life, but not necessarily synonymous. Breath also gives us allusions and comparisons to the Holy Spirit, and how He is breathing into us the breath of life, the faith in our hearts which receives from God the wonderful gifts that He gives us here in His divine service, “serving us” as again we talked about on Tuesday, the things that are done here being for our benefit, and not for God’s. But if we look deeper into the word we find another definition, that really defines this more as “soul”. And we think about the soul of a person. We talked about on Tuesday the definitions of Karen, and how the first word that may come to your mind when you think of her would be caring, funny, compassionate, those are definitions of her personality, or we could say, it would define her soul. This definition of “psuksay” means that we’re talking about someone’s very make up, their soul, their “life” what takes up their time, what they are passionate about, what is the most important thing in their heart, their desires, affections, one dictionary had it even defined as “the seat of their feelings.”

“Whoever finds his soul will lose it, and whoever loses his soul for my sake will find it.” We are blessed this morning to confirm two individuals into the Lutheran faith that was spoken for them at their Baptisms. They have been examined, and now they will come forward and vow before God and their brothers and sisters in Christ that this is truly their faith, strengthening the faith that they were given through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. And they are at a pivotal moment in their lives, a “dzoay” life definition, their literal lives as in the time that they are alive, and breathing, and eating etc., because they are entering a different stage of development, of a time of discovering themselves and getting an idea of what they want to do in the future. What will make up their “lives” so to speak, their “psuksay” lives. And that’s really at the heart of this verse. We go through our lives, and we figure out ourselves, and what makes us tick, what we are drawn to, what makes up our personalities, our interests, our desires, the things that we feel in our very soul. And there are earthly aspects of our personality that define us, but the point that Jesus is making here in our Gospel lesson, is that nothing can take the place of the faith in our hearts, and the important place of God in our lives, and that truly is referring to both definitions of our lives.

Meaning that whoever finds his soul, and defines it, and molds their lives, outside of Christ, and this is the severity that Jesus is talking about here, this is the seriousness of it, the absolute truth we are speaking of when we look at God’s Word, that even if our families, are affecting this relationship, even if our Father, or Mother, or our children were to drag us away from our identity and our soul being defined by our faith, then we are not worthy of Jesus Christ. Our lives are defined by the cross, the cross is the filter to which everything else is defined in our “lives” our makeup, our “psuksay” our soul. And we do find it, and it changes, and adapts as we grow older, or experience new things, or start new jobs, or find new desires and pursuits, but if it goes forward without God, without Jesus Christ, without the Holy Spirit guiding us, with us going after the earthly desires, and not staying connected to God’s Word, to God’s Sacraments, if we find our lives in the sense that we define them apart from God then we have lost our lives. We may have gained a life of popularity, or a busy life of work here on Earth where we are passionate about what we do, and we may even be blessed through our talents and abilities to do it well. But there is no lasting life, no everlasting “dzoay” life. We have lost all life, because Jesus is life, and without him, there is nothing.

“Whoever finds his life or soul, will lose it, and whoever loses his life or soul, for my sake, will find it.” Ashlyn, Connor, you will be asked these words. “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?” You can look around at all those gathered here today, and know with certainty that just about all of them have had those words read to them, and they have responded as you will, with the words, “I do, by the grace of God.” Jesus, as we talked about last week, doesn’t sugarcoat the Christian life. He isn’t here to lie to you. I’m not here to lie to you. These words are serious, because we live in a world of persecution and where being a Christian is not an easy thing. But to say that you will suffer all, even death, rather to fall away from the faith, is to say that you are willing to lose your life or your personality, or soul so to speak, or your earthly “life” in the sense of popularity, community, business, whatever way works best for you to think of it, is to say that when it comes to our faith, faith is first. God is first. Jesus is first. That Jesus is the filter, the lens, through which everything else is seen, through which our personality, our souls, our “lives” are formed as we grow up. Get jobs, date, get married, have kids, what groups we are involved with, what people we are involved with, what things are really truly important to us, it’s all defined through the basics that we learned in Confirmation. Through the confession of the Lutheran Church. That’s the cross we bear as Christians, that it’s not popular to make these decisions because others aren’t living for Christ, but living only for themselves. That the norm is to do what you want, to do what makes you happy, to put yourself first, and everything else second. But that’s not our lives. We don’t find our lives outside of Christ, because we lose them. Instead, we lose the earthly definition of “psuksay” life in order that nothing takes the place of the faith in our hearts, which receives everlasting life, through the death of Jesus Christ, who dies for our sins, and gives us this life free, as a gift. That gift changes our lives, it is the DNA and makeup of our souls, it defines how we live, what we do, how we treat others, and is the seed of the fruit that we bear in our lives of good works for the glorification of God and His name.

Confirmation isn’t the end. You know the basics. Time to grow. Grow in understanding. Grow as you do find your own life moving forward, in what you want to do, in who you want to be. Know that this is the place where the confusing things in life are made clear, where the bad can be made good, where you have an entire community, and family of people who want to help you, who want to encourage you, who want to be there with you every step of the way on your journey in this life. We are a family of faith, and we are here to help you. God be with you on your journey, may the fruit you bear be Christ, may you never forget what Jesus has done for you, and may you continue to grow in your faith all the days of your life.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.