

Pastor Jon Strasman's June 21, 2020 Sermon on Father's Day.

Text: Matthew 10:24-39

Following Jesus leads to life that really is life!

Happy Father's Day to all those Father's out there... and to all those remembering their Father's or Father Figures this day. Our family celebrated Father's Day early this week by camping for 2 nights on a site across from my mom and dad in Door County. We also played some golf, sat around the fire, and had s'mores. My dad hasn't had a s'more since he was a kid. He loved it.

Our lessons this week remind us how hard it is to be a follower of Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus means you are a student... a follower of Jesus. Sometimes the hardest teachers are the ones that make you learn the most. Thank you to my 6th grade teacher, Mrs. Muschinski, who believed I could be a good student. You learn by Jesus' example in the four gospels of how he loved people, fed people, and stood up for people who were left out or considered lost. This idea of learning by example reminds me of all the lessons I learned from my dad just by being his shadow. Working on cars, fishing, electrical work, etc. We learn by example and by practicing, failing, and trying again.

Being a disciple of Jesus is not the easy path in life. In the books "uncommon, uncommon life, and uncommon marriage", Tony Dungy, former NFL coach, calls following Jesus uncommon in our world today. It is not the easy path... but it is a path that leads to an abundant life. Like Jesus says, "39Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

So, how do lose your life for Jesus' sake? It means giving up the old way... or the old path you cling to and rising to the new life in Christ. It means letting go of the past and letting God lead. It means being less self-centered and more serving others. This is a daily journey as baptized children of God. The cross and our baptism allows us to start new each day afresh. We get to let the pain and disappointments of the past be washed clean by the cross.

Jesus warns his disciples that in following him, you will probably be maligned, experience divisions in your family, and possibly be killed

because of my name. But he says, do not fear three times. This does not sound like a fun job.

Following Jesus could will cause division in your family. A son will go against his father, a daughter against her mother, or a daughter in law against her mother in law. Trust me, we have teenagers with differences of opinion in our household. But Jesus is saying that as my disciple, you will sometimes have to go against your family of origin for justice and to love the neighbor.

Who in their right mind would want to sign up for this tour of duty? Well, I have news for you, “You did!” In your baptism you and/or your parents in our Lutheran Tradition signed you up for a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus. They promised in our Baptismal liturgy to live among God’s faithful people, put in your hands the scriptures, nurture you in faith and prayer, so that you can learn to trust God, proclaim Christ in word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace. Following Jesus will take your feet to places you never could imagine... possibly to the streets like so many are doing today for justice and equality.

Our Romans lesson compares our baptism to Jesus’ death and resurrection. You have put away the old life and risen to a new life in Christ. ³“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Our future looks bright as Christians. After we die, we are promised eternal life. But even now today, our past doesn’t define us. We get to rise to a new life daily. We can say every day, “this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Today we will have communion for the first time in a while. Here your sins are forgiven and you are set free to serve the neighbor in love.

Then in our Gospel there is the part of the sparrow and the hairs on a head. Jesus asks “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not

one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even all the hairs on your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

In other words, God will not prevent the disciples from suffering... the sparrows will eventually fall to the ground and die... hairs will fall out... but the Father promises be with us always. God can't stop our hardships, but God will journey with us through them. The cross of Jesus says the God walks with us in our suffering.

These lessons remind us that there will be difficulties just by being a disciple of Jesus. You may lose friends and family may disown you. But in the midst living out your baptismal calling, you will learn how valuable you are, and as a result, you will gain your life. You will know your purpose and how much you are loved by God.