

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost–June 28, 2020

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” –Matthew 10:39–

Within their immediate context, these words of Jesus have meaning for our family and friends. In the preceding verses, Jesus says that he did not come to bring peace but a sword. His law and gospel will produce division between people, and this is by design. Indeed, he says that he came to set family members against each other. Since our love for Jesus should exceed our love for all others, he tells us that we must choose him over family and friends in such cases. The one who finds his life (in his family and friends instead of Christ) will lose it.

However, the reverse is also true. The one who loses his life (among family and friends) for Christ’s sake will find it. Then, in the very next verse, Jesus tells us that our new life in him will include a whole new set of relationships. “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.” While we will lose some relationships, we will gain others. Some will reject us, but others will receive us!

Many of us have experienced this reality first hand. There are issues in our society that divide. Close friendships can be suddenly severed in anger and bitterness. Following Christ has never been easy, and as time goes on it seems that we still have to discern his holy will for his people since people with varying political views, scriptural views, and theological understandings don’t always agree or get along. What one calls “orthodox” another calls “heretical.” As Jesus told us, he did not come to bring peace but a sword. And his word is the sword that divides. (Hebrews 4:12)

In the theology of the cross, we view the events of our lives through the paradigm of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our conversion at baptism is a death of our old self and a rising of our new self. In our return to baptism, our old self is drowned through daily repentance so that our new self can arise. And since this has social implications as well, we must sometimes die to old relationships so that new ones can arise.

Prayer: For your sake, O Lord, we must sometimes lose family and friends. In such cases we pray that you might bring our estranged family and friends back to you and to us. Amen.

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