

2 Timothy 2.11-13
Faithful Messiah, Faithful Message
Wednesday after *Reminiscere*, 11 March 2020
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ Iesu iuva +

A meditation on God's Word written in 2 Timothy 2.11-13:

The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him;

if we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him;

if we deny Him, He also will deny us;

if we are faithless, He remains faithful—

for He cannot deny Himself.

Oremus: haec, pater sancte, verba tua sunt, etc.

The Baptism stone over here is connected in a long arc to eternity over here.

Written by the hand of God

in letters of suffering

on the life of every one of you.

An arc that's beset by many a danger. But an arc that you walk because of the faithfulness of Him who is its beginning and ending.

Isn't that what Paul's saying here to Timothy? "If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

Fellow-redeemed: you *have* died with Jesus.

With Christ in your Baptism your Old Adam was drowned and died. He's six feet under. With Christ in your Baptism the body of sin has been put to death and all your sins have been buried. A huge rock rolled in front of their grave. And now the life you live is the life lived not in and for you, but in and for Christ. That's what St. Paul says to the Colossians: You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

That's a mysterious thing, your death with Christ. Because to yourself I'm sure you feel quite...alive. You breathe. You eat. You sleep. You grow up. You decline. Everything that life is, you experience.

But your experience has been entirely made over in your Baptism. For with your Baptism, yes, you died with Christ. But in your Baptism you also were made alive again. But this time around it was not the old life, but a new life. This time around you took your first breath not under the scowl of God, but under His gracious smile. For this time around, the first air you breathed as you came up from the water of Baptism was air breathed into the lungs of a child of God. All sins drowned and dead. And given life by water and word. The old life, meaningless and hopeless. And endless grind to serve self and no one else. No altruism there. The new life, infused with meaning and hope: for you were called by God Himself to be transformed to the image of His Son, who came not to be served but to serve. That's the new life you live. And because that life is no longer lived for that great triune god, ME, MYSELF, AND I, no longer centered on ME and no longer about ME—the Scriptures call it a hidden life.

Beloved in the Lord: the entire life of the Old Adam can be summed up in one word: freedom. Freedom from creatureliness. Freedom from obligation. Freedom to try to be god if I want to be. It's self-expressive, self-actualizing, self-promoting. Though dying, it has every appearance of great liveliness. Though moribund, it acts as if it may assure its existence forever.

But that life has been put to death with Christ. And now there's a new life. Lived in Christ alone. To the world it doesn't look like much. Gone, its self-expressiveness. Now it expresses Christ. Gone its self-promotion. Now it looks to the interests of others. Gone its self-actualizing. Now revels in the gifts God has given it. Your old life was a-vocational. It heeded no call but its own. Your new life, deeply vocational: it heeds the calling and bidding of the Lord. It is a life hidden with Christ in God.

And that hidden life—that's the life and way of the cross, as in "Take up your cross and follow Me." It's deeply woven into your creatureliness, into the basic vocations the Lord has given you. You are a husband or a wife—and faithful to your marriage. You are single—and celibate as you await the Lord's gift of a spouse. You are a child, young or adult—and honor your parents. You are a baptized member of the Body of Christ—and encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ by prioritizing weekly church attendance. You're an employer or employee—and give and receive just wages for an honest day's work.

No one's writing headlines about this life. It is hidden.

And no one said it's easy. It's the life and way of the cross.

But, oh, the temptations in this life. The Old Man has been pulled under, but as Luther says, the sucker can swim. And he uses your difficulties and crosses that come to you in your vocation to assert himself. To seek happiness in a fraught marriage through divorce. To seek sexual pleasure and forget about God-ordained celibacy. To seek fulfillment at work through laziness. To seek and find what's best for you and your family not in God's Word and the service of God's house but in all the world has to offer.

Those are the crosses of the vocational life. You bear them when you endure. You bear the cross when, tempted to deny Him, you confess Him by your life. You bear the cross when, tempted to faithlessness, you cling in faith to Him is always faithful.

And under the cross—that's exactly where faith is most lively and really goes to work. It fixes its eyes on the One with whom you shall live—Jesus Christ, your Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. It fixes its eyes not on the suffering and cross of this life, but on the cross of Him with whom you shall reign forever—on Him who sits at the right hand of God, and who by His cross has made His enemies, and yours, His footstool. It sees all things now in view of eternity and therefore bears all things. Believes all things. Hopes all things. Endures all things.

Only see where this all starts—over here in the font, where the Lord by the blood of His Son made you His child. And see where it all ends—living and reigning with Christ in the joy of everlasting life.

And may the good Lord grant you all such faith, such endurance in suffering, to the end that by His grace you may confess Him that He may confess you, and remain forever faithful to Him whose faithfulness endures forever.

Amen.

jsb
sdg