

## Lent #2

2-28-2021

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Vicar Karen Pugatch

### Celebrate (Introduction)

“The second covenant in this year’s Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God’s promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all, who share Abraham’s faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we to get new identities in baptism, as we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Opening Hymn:** [“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”](#)

**Psalm:** Psalm 22:23-31

“You who fear the Lord, praise him!

all you sons of Jacob, glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel!

<sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or abhorred  
the affliction of the afflicted;

and he has not hid his face from him,  
but has heard, when he cried to him.

<sup>25</sup> From thee comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

<sup>26</sup> The afflicted<sup>[a]</sup> shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the Lord!  
May your hearts live forever!

<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup> Yea, to him<sup>[c]</sup> shall all the proud of the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and he who cannot keep himself alive.

<sup>30</sup> Posterity shall serve him;  
men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation,

<sup>31</sup> and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
that he has wrought it.”

**Hymn of Praise:** [“In the Cross of Christ I Glory”](#)

**Prayer of the Day**

“O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [Romans 4:13-25](#)

**The Gospel:** [Mark 8:31-38](#)

**Hymn of the Day:** [“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”](#)

**The Message:** ([Video Link](#))

Life can often be extremely confusing even to the point of not making any sense. We may experience or witness something or perhaps hear something which may seem too far-fetched or unrealistic. This is when we catch ourselves saying “what?” “That’s beyond my comprehension.” “That’s impossible.” “You’ve got to be kidding.” We are going through such a moment in history with an ongoing deadly pandemic and a nation so divided that its future may be in jeopardy. To say it has left us in an unbelievable state is an understatement. It all has been beyond any reality which we may have ever thought possible.

This is exactly what we may also think when being confronted with Jesus words in today’s Gospel lesson. Jesus was explaining to His disciples what it would mean to be His follower. “Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Are you kidding that is really drastic? Do you really think that anyone would accept such unrealistic conditions? Can this actually happen? Can someone actually be able to deny themselves? Now that Jesus has our attention He doesn’t stop there. “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

It’s all so confusing — save life, lose life —losing life saves life? It is even irrational, defying logic. How can you save something by losing it or lose something by saving it? It makes no sense. Like the king in the musical “The King and I” said “Tis a puzzlement!”

But, maybe it is not such a “puzzlement” when you think about it. In all walks of life those who have succeeded have had goals to which they have driven themselves to reach.

Many may have had natural born talents of which they were blessed. Such talented people are often thought to have a gift given to them which needs no sacrifice to develop — no self-giving. But that's not quite the truth. Talents and gifts must be developed. For instance the athlete to develop the skill and coordination it takes hour upon hour, day upon day and even year upon year of dedicated work sacrificing a normal life. Practice and learning seems to never end before the goal of success is reached.

This is not only true with the athlete but it is also true with the musician, the artist, the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the plumber and so on. To be the best you can be at any of life's endeavors means giving up many other things in life which others may feel are important and meaningful even though there may be some natural talent involved. They must give-up what would be seen as a normal life in order to gain their goal. David Foster, the pianist and producer of well over a dozen Grammy award records with singers he had discovered, was himself a gifted child prodigy. He has said in an interview that he had to give up much of his normal childhood and teen years in order to reach his goals. He said he had to work when young to be able to play when he grew older. I have witnessed this in many young musicians, singers, and athletes.

I can vividly recall the young figure skater Kimmie Meisner? I remember talking with her mother and reading interviews which related what she went through. Practically all her childhood and youth were spent at the ice rink and ballet studio practicing and practicing in order to achieve her goal of becoming a world class figure skater. She had no time to do what other children and teenagers her age did. In a very real sense David Foster, Kimmie, and many of the talented young musicians and singers I have had the privilege to know have had to give up their normal lives. In the long run they all sacrificed their normal lives in order to gain another life — a life of being a top producer in the music business, a winner of the World Gold Medal in figure skating and award winners in their fields of endeavor. They gave up life to gain life.

On the other hand we all have seen just the opposite. We all have seen people and especially young people living their lives as if there is no tomorrow. They only see the moment and waste it away doing things which lead them nowhere, preparing themselves for nothing. All of their lives are lived as if to save the frivolous life style of their youth. The harsh reality is that all those fun and games are for naught for when the adult years arrive that life of youth is lost leaving just a memory with little or no foundation for the present and future to build upon. Therefore you have those who lose their life for the sake of a future life and those who want to save their present frivolous life at the expense of their future life or losing their possibility for a successful future.

It is not confusing or incomprehensible to see that the outcome of our goals and commitment in life are determined by the sacrifices we are willing to make. Therefore what Jesus was talking about in defining discipleship is not so unreal or even outlandish. We see the same principle occurring in the world about us.

To be a follower of Christ, to be a disciple, means there is a cost to be paid. The cost is to give up spending the totality of life in being motivated in the pursuit of what's here today and gone tomorrow. Make no mistake about it there is a cost to pay when God's love is placed as the core of motivation in our lives. That cost may just mean giving up some of the pursuit of those things considered to be treasures of this life. But when the importance of these treasures overshadows God's love, they become a fatalistic endeavor in life. "For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?"

The alternative to the Good News is clearly presented by Jesus, "For those who want to save their life (that is to keep living for the treasures of this world) will lose it." The old saying goes at death you can't take it with you. But, on the other hand, "Those who lose their life for my sake (that is those who choose to see the treasure as secondary to a life in God's love) will save it." They are the ones who will find the fullness of life, for it is life in the eternal love of God.

The cost of discipleship then is as Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." You must lose your life in order to save it. There is that cross which every Christian must face in life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in his book "The Cost of Discipleship": "The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result in encountering Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death – we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ."

This cost of discipleship which ends with the eternal life in Christ, God's love, shatters the world of religiosity. The cost of discipleship is a continual casting aside of the shallowness of the old self within us, the old order which easily entraps us. This just may mean the sacrifice of normalcy or complacency in order to take that path of God's love into what may seem to be unnerving new challenges, new opportunities, new experiences, and a new way of living. The cost of discipleship, as the disciples would discover, gives no assurance of a free ride or any kind of cheap grace. Discipleship brings with it the realization that Christianity is just not some cultural, patriotic, or societal nicety. But, to live this call to discipleship brings with it the life which exceeds anything which this world can offer - a life lived eternally with God. Of course this means "You must lose your life in order to gain life." That is the reality of the life in Christ. That is when God's love is realized. To examine ourselves in light of this is the challenge of Lent.

**Anthem:** ["Children of the Heavenly Father" Augustana College Choir](#)

**Offering\*:** ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

## **The Prayer**

Father of all wisdom and compassion, during this time when so many are suffering, we pray that you may guide us so they we may help bring relief and comfort to those stricken and affected. Bring enlightenment to those who continue to spread misinformation and hate keeping us a divided people with an uncertain future. Open our hearts to live a life filled with forgiveness, compassion, empathy, and love.

We are thankful are extremely grateful for the vaccines which have been produced to stop the spread of this pandemic. Give us the patience in waiting our turn in receiving this vaccine. Continue to give the medical community the wisdom and strength to care for those who have been overcome by this life threatening virus.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Della Mae Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Vicki and Christian Zanartu, Pastor Jack,  
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["O Jesus, I Have Promised"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thought.

\*Offering to be sent to:  
Bob Brackbill  
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church  
9122 Sybert Drive  
Columbia Hills  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291)