

Pentecost 5 6/28/2026
Matthew 10:34-42 8A

SERMON TEXT: GOSPEL LESSON FROM THE 10TH CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Are you worthy of Jesus? In our lesson this morning, Jesus says that to be worthy of Him, we must love Him more than our father, mother, son, or daughter; to be worthy of Him we must take up our cross and follow Him. Wow! Hearing our Lord's words, we have to take a look at ourselves and ask: Can anyone be worthy of Jesus?

Who is worthy of Jesus? None of us by our very sinful natures. Even though we are Christians, our flesh is lazy and inclined to do only what pleases us. We love to please people, be popular with them, even when that means bowing to their sinful, base desires. You know how it is. We lie. We spread gossip to degrade our neighbor, and make ourselves look better. We laugh at sexual humor. We even delight and rejoice when our neighbor "gets theirs". Once again, this week in our lesson, Jesus is teaching us that we are in the world, but not of the world. Yet, how we love the things of this world. We hoard and covet, as though this world is all there is. And, how we hate to be inconvenienced. We are not patient.

If we are not worthy by our very nature, how can we become worthy of Jesus? Jesus says that to be worthy of Him, we must take up the cross and follow Him. This was Jesus' way of saying, "Believe in me; Trust in me".

He calls us to believe that He is the true Son of God, sent by the Father from heaven, and that He goes to the cross to suffer the ultimate price for our sins. In other words, to follow is to believe and trust that Jesus died on the cross for **my** sins. We do not become worthy of Jesus by our

good works or good intentions, or our obedience. We become worthy of Jesu because of His obedience, His suffering, His death, His work for us. We are worthy of eternal life because we have been given His worthiness -- His righteousness -- as a gift, by faith in Him.

But, that nagging question remains: "Why?" Why do I have to take up the cross? After all, the cross means suffering and death. And, isn't the popular thinking and message of Christianity today that if you just believe in Jesus, then everything is going to be wonderful, marvelous, a journey on the yellow brick road? Don't TV evangelists say that if you just have enough faith, God will bless you with wealth, success, and great health? It sounds wonderful, doesn't it? But, is that really what Christianity is all about? Does Jesus promise glory, health, wealth, and success here and now if we just have enough faith and follow the right steps?

Listen to the Savior's words,

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me".

Wow! Unsettling, isn't it! According to Jesus, our Christian life is not going to be free from trouble, but that we should in fact expect rejection, hardship! Not peace, but a sword. This is what Jesus means when He says, "*Take up your cross and follow me.*" He means that will have sufferings, persecutions, trials, and difficulties that come as a result of following in Him. The world hates us because it first hated Jesus. And the world hates the offense of the cross, because Jesus' death on that cross

reminds us that we are poor, miserable sinners who cannot save ourselves. The preaching of the Gospel is a stumbling block and offense to the world.

What is shocking is that our faith is a **rock of offense** even to the member of our own families. It's one thing to be hated, ridiculed, by the world, but it **hurts** when that ridicule and rejection come from an unbelieving spouse or a child who has left the faith: "Stop giving all that money! Why do you have to spend so much time at church?" "Don't tell me how to live my life!" *"A person's enemies will be those of his own household"* (v. 36).

Jesus promises that suffering, even strife and struggle with our own family members, will part of the Christian life. No, not pleasant, but it comes with faith in Christ.

Martin Luther describes this kind of suffering well in his explanation of the Lord's Prayer, saying,

"For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing. And let no one think that he shall have peace. He must risk whatever he has upon earth – possessions, honor, house, and estate, wife and children, body and life. Now, this hurts our flesh and the Old Adam. The test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assaulted, and to let go whatever is taken from us" (Large Catechism, 3rd Petition).

Luther truly echoes the words of Jesus, if we are to be worthy of Jesus, we must be willing and ready to lose everything: possessions, home, family, and life and count it all as nothing before God. But oh, no, we **don't want** to hear that. These words greatly grieve our flesh and the weakness of our faith Adam. We don't want to lose our stuff, because we are always tempted to love the things of this world more than Jesus.

But what the Old Adam can't realize is that in giving everything up everything here on earth for loss and clinging to Christ alone as our true

and only possession, we have, in fact, gained everything. He says in today's lesson, *"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"* (v. 39). If our life means popularity with people -- especially pleasing their sinful flesh, even when those people are the members of our own family and we love our earthly possessions more than Jesus -- ultimately we will lose everything, because we will lose heaven. Jesus says it this way, *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life"* (Mt 16:26)? Instead, Jesus tells us that whoever loses his life for His sake will find it. When we count everything in this life as nothing -- losing everything for Jesus' sake -- then we will truly find our life in Christ. Dear Saint of God, beyond the temporary suffering and strife of today, life in heaven awaits us. The eternal joys of being with Jesus far surpass any glory this present age offers. And, God who has called us is faithful – He will bring us through the tears of today to that dear land of rest.

So while we are still in this world, suffering under the cross today, the Good News is that we do not carry the cross alone. Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us. He is with us, to strengthen us that we may bear the cross, no matter how heavy it may be. By faith, we are one with Christ, who Himself bore the sufferings and wrath of the cross on our behalf, so that we wouldn't have to. Our sins are forgiven so we can follow after Him and be counted worthy for His sake. Through His Word, He strengthens us on the journey home, with constant promises of His forgiveness and all-abiding love. Through our Baptism, He crucifies our old sinful flesh that loves the things of the world and resists God's grace and promises. Through the Lord's Supper, He gives His very body and blood for our forgiveness while strengthening us today. And, as we eat and drink, we become not only one with Jesus, but fellow believers in one body. We

strengthen each other and bear one another's burdens as we walk through this life toward our heavenly home. A heavenly home where we will find out just how true it is that whoever loses his life for Christ's sake will find it. For in Jesus, we have everything.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.