**Ephesians 2:4-10 October 29, 2022 (Sam Somsel Funeral)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from the chosen Epistle lesson, Ephesians chapter 2 here re-reading these words. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” This is our text

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ but especially to you the family and friends of Cecil Dale Somsel,

I don’t believe I ever called him Cecil. To me he was always Sam. A kind man who walked through the doors of Trinity Lutheran Church here in Onekama and sat in a familiar place, heard the Word of God, and received the body and blood of Jesus Christ here at this altar. He was a constant, a man I would see regularly on a Sunday morning who didn’t have much to say, but was faithful to come into God’s house to receive from the Lord the wonderful gifts He gives in this His Divine Service to us. And that’s what we are here to receive today, the gifts of our Lord, especially praying today for the gift of peace and comfort, as we remember this dear child of God who has gone to be with His Lord. To me I knew him in a professional capacity. My time spent with him was here, in the church, we never went hunting together, he never showed me how to fix something….for me he was a member, a man, but to you gathered he was more. A father, a husband, a grand-father or great-grandfather. Perhaps he was a co-worker, or maybe just a friend. As we look back on his life we know that he was a worker, a man who stayed busy throughout his life doing a variety of things but staying active, finding time for leisure and hunting and fun, but also a man who stayed active in the work he was called to do. But today, as he is laid to rest, we remember a very simple fact that can give hope to us even today on a day of tears and sadness. The fact that Sam, just as all of us gathered here today, are God’s workmanship.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We didn’t just come to be by accident through forces external to us. We are made. We heard it in our Old Testament lesson, the difference in the order of creation, in the process of God creating out of nothing the world that is around us, how we were intentionally formed from the dust of the ground. “Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” We are more than just a mindless creature led by our own desires, here by accident and disappearing into nothingness when we cease to draw breath. We are made. We are God’s workmanship and we have breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, life for our physical bodies, but also the eternal life that is our very souls. While we see before us the absence of the breath of body, we can know with certainty, that despite the fact that Sam is no longer with us his soul lives in the presence of God his creator. He lives on, as God’s workmanship and his beloved child.

But not all work is good, after all, look at Sam’s life. What was one thing he was famous for, something that he was constantly called on to do? Fix things. In a perfect world there is no need of someone who can repair things because things don’t break down, they don’t wear out, but we don’t live in a perfect world, even if we were created in perfection. Sam himself was not a perfect creation. He was a sinner. Just like you, just like me. We all were born into sin due to the failure in the Garden of Eden, the fall into sin, the disobeying of God’s Law, the infection of sin that spread and destroyed our perfect relationship to God our Heavenly Father, this infection of sin that rooted deep and brought even what we must face this morning. Our bodies are imperfect, they wear out, they grow weak, they lose the focus they once had, and we all will die. There is no repairing us permanently. There are steps that can be taken to prolong our time, but the clock is always ticking, and there is no repairing our sinful and fallen bodies. Not with human hands. We must repent of our sins and recognize our failures. We must come to God with simple words, and the truth of our sinfulness on our lips. “God…be merciful to me, a sinner.” And I remind you, I knew Sam as a member, as a man who I found here in God’s house often, who sat in those pews and confessed his sins. Who came forward to receive the forgiveness of sins through the body and blood of Jesus Christ in with and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The church does not exist for the perfect, for those who don’t need to be repaired, it is not a country club for the morally elite. The church is a hospital for sinners, and Sam was a patient like everyone else. And he received, and was forgiven, and saved by the blood of Jesus Christ His Savior, and your Savior as well.

Sam’s life was full of labor, and he was blessed with 84 years to serve the Lord in many and various vocations. But no one can labor forever, the work at some point has to be done. We serve the Lord in the years we have, but eventually the time comes when we must rest from our labors, and enter into the eternal rest that only God can give. Which is what Jesus is talking about in our Gospel lesson from Matthew chapter 11, as Matthew records the comforting words that Jesus shared in his ministry. “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Sam was a man who served and labored, but who also needed the rest of his soul, just as we all do. We are comforted with the truth that his work is done. He no longer has to labor and work in an earthly way, he now rests with the Lord who died to save him. He has clarity and peace. Our sorrow on a day such as today is that we don’t get to receive the benefits of his work any longer. We can’t learn from him personally, we can’t ask for his expertise, we can’t share in his joys, and he is no longer with us. But his lessons are, what he taught you, what you own that he fixed or gave you. He’s still with you every time you think about him and know that he is with the Lord. He’s with you anytime you see something being repaired, because you can think of how he is now perfected in the presence of Jesus Christ.

I’m not going to lie to you and tell you that there a one size fits all way to mourn the loss of Sam. There is no right way to mourn, there is no universal truth when it comes to missing a loved one. Mourning is a process, it doesn’t just happen for a few days and you move on with your life. Don’t feel guilty if you miss him long after this day where you are gathered with family and friends who love and support you. I pray that you will be comforted in the days, the weeks, the months, and the years to come as you remember Sam. But don’t give in to the temptation to mourn without hope. To think that Sam has just ceased to be, and find only sadness in remembering him like he was and is no more. When you remember him, be comforted in knowing that he was fearfully and wonderfully made, created by God, formed in the same way you are and that he had the breath of life breathed into his lungs. Remember that he has been given rest, rest not just in an earthly sense but a true and final rest for his soul. And meditate upon his salvation found not in the works of his capable hands, not in the multiple repairs and the wonderful work that he did. Meditate upon the truth that his salvation came about completely outside of what he did, but solely on the work of Jesus Christ his Savior. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works….” May God bless and keep you in a reminder of his love often, to comfort you as you remember Sam. To God be all glory now and forever.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.