**John 14:1-6 May 15, 2021 (Pete Lutz Funeral)**

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ but especially to you the family and friends of Pete Lutz,

It’s been over 5 months since Pete has passed, we’ve been able to read his obituary and hear memories and stories at the beginning of our service today. We’ve had time to think about it, this service isn’t like other services of remembrance where we may be meeting just a few days after his passing and where we are still working through our emotions and coming to grips with what has happened. Covid-19 has brought a lot of changes upon all of us. So, what else is there to say about our dear brother in Christ, Pete Lutz? And who am I to say it? I may be the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Onekama, and I was born in Michigan, at least I have that going for me, but I am not a lifelong member of Manistee County. I am not a farmer, my Father is not a farmer, his father was not a farmer. I did not even know Pete for that long as I’ve only been here at this church a few years. But to read the accomplishments of his life, and to hear stories about him leads me to simply ask, what else is there to say? For you gathered here today, although it has been a few months since Pete’s passing, I’m sure you’ve shared your own memories together and had moments of remembering Pete fondly, of looking back on his life and all that he accomplished and was involved in. I’m sure you had memories of when Lorraine passed away, and you were all gathered here with Pete to say goodbye to her. If there was one word to encompass all of those memories, all of those moments, if there was one word to sum up Pete Lutz’s life….I feel the answer would be: Blessed.

Pete was blessed by his family. He was blessed by his friends. He was blessed by his community and his state. He was blessed in his work and to see it prosper and grow. He was blessed in years of plenty, and although hardships and years of few may not seem like a blessing, he was even blessed by those to produce in him endurance and resilience and toughness to keep going. My first call in the ministry was to a small town in Kansas called Palmer. It is a proud agricultural community. As I said before, I am not a farmer, I did not grow up from a family of farmers, but these Kansas farmers that I served right out of seminary taught me in my ministry to them the resilience and faith it takes to be a farmer. They taught me some of the ins and outs of planting, growing, and harvesting, which I appreciated even if I still really don’t have a great grasp on all that goes into it. That work in itself, while hard, and strenuous, and frustrating at times, is a blessing.

Pete was blessed, but it is my job for you to see today that those blessings did not just materialize out of the air in a random way. They weren’t just coincidences and luck. They were specific blessings from a specific and defined God, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were the result of God’s creation of this world, they were the result of God’s gift of a Son who came to save us all from our sin, they were a gift from the work of the Holy Spirit given on Pentecost in the formation of the church who calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies us in the one true faith. God blessed Pete in many and various ways. God gave Pete what he had, including you, his family and friends. And when God saw fit, at the right time, God called Pete home. God took Pete from this world of sin, pain, disease, and death, and took him to be in His presence for all eternity. While this action brings tears, and sadness, and pain for us here on earth as we remember him and have to face the fact that he is no longer with us, we have to recognize it as another blessing in Pete’s life. His work is done and he has entered the place of his eternal rest. He has entered the place of eternal happiness and joy being in the presence of God His heavenly Father, Jesus His Savior and Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the comforter.

The challenge for you gathered here today, is not to mourn Pete without hope or to give in to despair since he is no longer with you. Rather, it’s to see the blessings that God has given you in your life. Pete was a blessing for you. Your family and friends, gathered around you here today are a blessing for you. Your brothers and sisters in Christ, here at Trinity Lutheran Church in Onekama are a blessing for you in your time of grief. Just as Pete was blessed in many and various ways, you have been blessed, with times of plenty and times of few. With good times and bad times. While we can look back at Pete’s life and see great accomplishments, we also must recognize his failures. His sinfulness. His need for a Savior and Redeemer. Pete wasn’t perfect, and perfect is the standard for salvation. Hear the words from Matthew chapter 5:48, “You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Pete wasn’t perfect. He was sinful from birth, just as we all are, as we know from Psalm 51:5, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Pete sinned. We all do. Pete needed forgiveness. You do too. There is no salvation found in your own works before God. No matter how many acres you own, or how many awards you receive. No matter how far you’ve traveled in your life, or how many things you’ve done in your community. Our works before God are as filthy disgusting rags. There is no salvation in them. For you to believe that Pete was saved based upon his own actions today is not a blessing but a curse. A curse that will lead to your own destruction. Salvation is not found in what we do, it’s found in the words of Jesus Christ here in our Gospel lesson from John chapter 14. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

So many times in our lives we have to face the unknown. I’m sure it was true in Pete’s life as a farmer. What should I do? What path should I take? What way should I go? And the answer lies simply before us in the clear words of Holy Scripture. Jesus is the way. He is the path. There is no salvation without him. He guides us on our path through His Word. He is the truth, in a world of lies, that will lead you to believe that you can do enough to save yourself. He is the truth, he doesn’t lie to you or give you false hope. You are a sinner, you can’t save yourself. But the good news of God’s Word is that not only is He the truth He is the life. We are joined to him through the waters of Holy Baptism and just as he rose from the dead and defeated death, he gives eternal life to us. He gave it to Pete. Pete came to God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ. What a blessing. Pete was blessed in life, and blessed in death. This truth brings comfort in the hardest of times, because he’s not gone, his journey hasn’t ended eternally. He lives on with God in eternal joy. He lives on through you, his family and friends, in the memories you share of him, in the lessons that he taught you in your life, in how he was a blessing to you just as you were a blessing to him. This doesn’t need to be a somber day of despair, even if tears flow and there is pain, sadness, and hurt. Because the last thing you will hear as you walk out of this sanctuary on the way to the cemetery is a beautiful song of remembrance.

And as the song encourages you to remember Pete in the beauties of God’s creation, I simply ask that you remember the one who gave Pete so many blessings as well. That you remember that Jesus died and rose again for Pete. And that God blessed Pete in many and various ways, through Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. God be with you, comfort you, and strengthen you in the days, the weeks, the months, and the years to come as you remember Pete.

Amen.

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

Amen.