**Luke 14:25-35 September 4, 2022**

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 our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 14 here re-reading these words. “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“We’ll see what happens.” Someone comes to you asking if you think something is going to work out, if you’ve done the proper work in setting it up and seeing that it will be accomplished and in order to calm them down or to end the conversation you say, “We’ll see what happens.” In reality, if you really think about it, this statement isn’t very comforting at all. It’s not saying anything. Of course we will see what happens, because something is going to happen. When it comes to a project, to your health, to your life, to everything in this world, something is inevitably going to happen. The question is how have you affected what’s going to happen? Have you taken the proper steps to make sure that it’s successful? Or are you simply sitting back and saying “We’ll see what happens.” Because if you haven’t done what you know you need to do, you don’t need to see what happens, you know what will happen. To just say, “We’ll see what happens” isn’t enough. To float through life, hoping that things will turn out alright and ignoring the danger of something isn’t responsible, and it’s also not how it works being a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are two options, you love Christ and hate sin, or you hate Christ and love sin, and to love Christ and follow him means that everything else is second. This is a harsh lesson to learn, but to put everything on the same level playing field and hope that it works out, to just sit back and “see what happens” will only lead to your destruction.

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Which leads us to the Lutheran question we find in the Small Catechism, “What does this mean?” To be a Christian means to hate my family? How does this relate to honoring my Father and Mother in the 4th commandment as we find in the book of Exodus? Or loving my wife as much as Christ loves the church and lays down his life for her as Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 5? How can I be a good Father and hate my children? What does this all mean? The answer lies in priority, and also in a very simple concept. We are conditioned in our lives to always put things into rankings, meaning that if something isn’t first, it’s second which isn’t so bad. We are blessed with so many options, and usually there are so many that if we can’t find our number 1 choice, we’ll gladly take number 2 or 3 and be just as happy. Walk into any convenience store and you’ll find a whole variety of different candy you can eat, these days they’ve even added different flavors to favorite candy so you don’t have to pick between a Reeses peanut butter cup and m and ms, you have to choose to between a regular reeses, a thin reeses, a white chocolate reeses, a reeses with potato chips in it, and then you have to choose between regular m and ms, peanut m and ms, peanut butter m and ms, mini m and ms, and that’s only giving the example of choosing between two different types. Variety is the spice or seasoning of life, which is something we will discuss later in this message, the spice and seasoning of the salt of the earth, but we can usually find our preference. But what if there was no second option, there was no second place, it’s not a ranking of 1, 2, 3 and down the list, what if it was a simple concept that you can only choose one thing to love. This is an absolute sort of mindset, you love 1 and hate the rest. What would you pick? If you pick the peanut butter cups, then you hate all the other candys. Seems harsh doesn’t it? But we’re not talking about something as insignificant as candy brands, we’re talking about the Almighty God, we’re talking about Good and evil here. You can’t say you follow God and believe in him and are a disciple of Jesus Christ, while at the same time having fellowship and putting something unholy on the same level as the holy and righteous. That’s not how it works. You don’t just sit back and “see what happens” in this instance, you either follow Christ, or you follow sin, sin that is separation from God. Because if the choice is Christ or your father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, or even yourself, there is not multiple choices that lead to your salvation. It’s harsh, it’s hard to hear, but it’s true. What did we talk about a few weeks ago? That door to salvation? What does it look like? It’s narrow. Who is Jesus talking to? “Now great crowds accompanied Jesus” So the lesson is simple, the concept is simple enough to understand, we don’t look at the things in our life and follow after everything we want, and simply just sit back and “see what happens.” We know what happens when we follow man rather than God and put anything before him. So instead we hate all in comparison to the love we have for Jesus Christ, because only through Jesus do we have fellowship with the Father and are saved from sin.

And to pretend otherwise is foolishness, and vanity. It’s to float through life with no direction and just hope that things will work out. Like building a tower, in this case better understood not just as a small sort of structure like a deer stand or something that you would just have one person stand up in, but the word here for tower really means more like a fortress. You don’t start building without understanding the cost. Otherwise if you just “see what happens” you’ll see that you don’t have enough materials, and the building won’t be completed. The same with war, you don’t just “see what happens” by sending men off to their death against a greater number of enemies. You understand what it is you are getting into and what you are up against, you recognize the seriousness of the situation and you make the proper adjustments in your life so that your kingdom and your men aren’t destroyed.

We can’t just sit back and “see what happens.” And pretend like it’s not a serious problem that we sin in our lives. We pray to God in the Lord’s Prayer “Lead us not into temptation.” Then we willingly and gladly put ourselves into tempting situations without a second thought. We have an aloof attitude when it comes to sin, we don’t protect our eyes and our bodies from temptation as we should, but we just go about our lives “seeing what happens.” We give no thought to what we watch, what we read, who we surround ourselves with, what we do and where we go. When we know what will happen if we continue down these roads. And the danger is right in front of our faces, the words and warnings of Jesus Christ. “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” We are called to be the salt of the earth, yet we continue to tempt fate and put ourselves into temptation by sinning so recklessly. When we know what will happen. We have ears, we have heard, the Lord speaks to us this morning, and we hear it again, and we go about our lives, and we “see what happens.”

But we also have been granted a blessing greater than the crowds gathered who hear Jesus speak on this particular day. Because we don’t have to see what happens in the life of Jesus Christ, we know what happens. We are blessed with the Word of God that speaks to us the truth of his death and also his resurrection. Jesus says, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” And for the crowds gathered this reference would be about carrying a cross on the way to crucifixion, a grisly and horrible picture of going through life, bearing a cross, but they didn’t know at that moment what happens specifically to Jesus. This isn’t just an illustration by Jesus about bearing the load and weight of being a Christian, when we hear the word cross we know that he is talking about how he dies for sin. Jesus speaks about the serious danger of sin because he came to take away sin by dying in the place of the sinful. And we are the sinful. We know this. We can’t ignore it, we have ears, we have heard, we don’t just sit back and see what happens when we are covered in sin. But we know what happens to sin. We know where Jesus is going, and what he’s going to do, and how he is going to save us from that sin, that sin that separates us, that sin that takes away the saltiness and taste of us, the salt of the earth. The comfort we have in the weight and cost of discipleship, is that we know how the story ends. And we know that Jesus doesn’t relent and give up because of the failures of the crowds who can’t bear the message or even the betrayal of his own beloved disciples who abandon him. We know what happens. He carries his cross to the place of the skull and dies for your sin. That’s love, a greater love than earthly families, a stronger bond than even brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers and their children. Because the love we have for each other is but a picture of the love that God has for us. And so up against that standard, that picture, that perfect love of God, we hate all, and would sacrifice all to be children of the most high and saved by his death and his resurrection. There is no sorrow in bearing the cross because from the cross he went to the grave, and from the grave he rose from the dead. He lives. Christ is Risen, we can proclaim this great joy in and out of the Easter season because again, we have the blessing of knowing how the story ends.

We are the salt of the earth, the salt that purifies, the salt that seasons, we have been called to bear our own crosses in life and be God’s witnesses. And it won’t be easy. I’m not here to tell you that if you go out into your life and tell others about Jesus “we’ll just see what happens” and I’m sure it will all be fine. Bearing the name of Jesus and being a Christian isn’t easy, but salt that isn’t salty is useless, it is so worthless you can’t even throw it in a field or get any use out of it, “It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away.” Jesus here is teaching that it’s not about salt, it’s about you, it’s about your faith, it’s about your life. You are the salt of the earth, you are called to service, you are called to be purified of your sin and to point others and their sinful hearts to the purification that comes from the cross of Jesus Christ. And you are called to season, to spice up life, by making life more than just meaningless vanities and fleeting pleasures and pointing to purpose and lasting joy. But if you will not serve the Lord than you are salt without saltiness, which is useless. You can’t say you’re a Christian and do nothing and “see what happens.” We are called to serve, because we have the joy and comfort of knowing how Jesus’ story ends, and how our own story ends. Because discipleship leads to a greater joy, and a greater peace, that is promised to us who have been forgiven by God. May that joy and peace to come lead our lives and embolden our actions, as we go out as the salt of the earth, knowing what will happen, and confident of our salvation known only through the love of Jesus Christ and the cross he bore to save us.

Amen.

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

Amen.