

## Trinity 4

I take as my text today from the Morning Prayer lesson in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. Matthew:

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.”

This verse from St. Matthew is the final verse of 15 taken from the New Testament reading for Morning Prayer.

It, in a sense, sums up the entire passage that begins:

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

The passage itself may be taken as Jesus’ warning to His disciples of what is going to come about, not only what He will face but also what they in turn, even all Christians to follow, will face.

Indeed, beginning with the words that the “disciple is not above his master,” Jesus intimates that they will endure in their own time, and in their own way, similar to what He will endure.

The final verse of the passage about finding and losing one’s life, further defines what is the Christian expectation.

A very sobering passage, delivered not without love, it defines the complex relationship of the Christian within the world, the price for loyalty, and the reward that awaits those who are steadfast in their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.

The household of Christ must suffer the same as our Lord, the Master of the House. We cannot escape the suffering of the world and still call ourselves “followers of Christ.”

We Christians are called out of the world to join with our Lord in a battle unimaginable against sin and evil.

Jesus tells us that in verse 34:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Our Lord knew that His Victory over Satan and death would not bring spiritual peace to the world. Though defeated by the Cross, Satan was not about to give up, for there was still a rich harvest of souls in the world among those who would deny Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

We are in constant conflict with the Devil, who will use whatever means he can to lure us away from our Lord and enslave us for eternity.

From our physical presence, the spiritual reality seems so distant.

When we look around us and see the beauty of God's Creation, we find it difficult to image a spiritual reality where there is a battle for our eternal lives.

Yet, in the midst of all of this beauty, we see what evil can do and has done; what it continues to do.

We see today, more and more, what Jesus must have meant when He said: "The slave is not above his master."

And, with His statement:

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

We cannot but realize the need for commitment, as well as the cost; the cost if we accept our Lord's call to arms against sin and evil, as well as the cost if we refuse His call.

Sin and evil is personified by those who defy our Lord's Commandment of Love: to love God and to love one another.

There is no divine justification for action toward any one of God's creation that is not predicated upon love, the love that flows from God to us.

As Christians, we are bound to love.

As any other than Christian, a belief in God cannot exempt love, nor justify hatred and violence.

History has demonstrated to us the reality of Jesus' warning to His disciples.

Suffering has not come only from those who are not Christian, but also from among those who forget that Jesus was sent into the world, out of love; and died for the sins of the world, out of love.

Among the 15 verses from St. Matthew are these words from our Lord:

Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I  
confess also before my Father which is in heaven.  
But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny  
before my Father which is in heaven.

Jesus gives us a choice: to confess Him or deny Him.

By a confession, we commit ourselves to Him in our entirety; not by words alone, but also by our deeds, our actions, our examples as light shining in the darkness, and, most importantly, by our willingness to suffer with Him and for Him.

Though we may never be called to suffer as so many other Christians have been called; nevertheless, it is our commitment and willingness to do so, if called upon, that marks us indelibly as one of His.

Here, we have been looking soberly at our lot as Christians, the awesome responsibility of commitment to Christ.

Yet, we must also keep in mind, and never lose sight of the very Nature of God, that He is Love, and that all He has created bears the mark of his Love.

For us, our world is a paradox of beauty and death.

Our present state is not a pretty picture, though; and, if we dwell on this picture, there is a sense of gloom and impending doom that overshadows the beauty around us, and erodes the beauty within us.

In his Epistle passage today from the Letter to the Romans, Paul tells us that as Christians, there is hope, and that the sufferings of this present world, our present life, are nothing compared with the glory of eternity with God.

At baptism, we Christians became adopted children of God; therefore, we can look forward to the day when we will receive the full blessing of that adoption: the day of judgment.

As Christians, we are kept, preserved, and sustained in our trials, in the sufferings of the world, by that hope.

It is an “earnest expectation” that we eagerly await: the dawn, the daybreak of Glory.

We live in a paradox: the beauty of all of creation, in the midst of a dying, decaying world.

But, for all the doom and gloom; the warnings and expectation of sufferings; the trials and tribulation that confront us as Christians; this day is still a beautiful day, for it is the day that God has made; it is a glimpse into the beauty of God’s creation.

It is a day when we can come forward to worship God “in the beauty of holiness,” receive His blessings, and be filled with His Heavenly Banquet, nourished and strengthened spiritually in our commitment to the rigors of the Christian Life.