

**Lessons for The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

**July 2, 2023**

Psalm 119:153-160 ~ *The psalmist seeks deliverance from suffering in the fulfillment of God's law.*

Jeremiah 28:5-9 ~ *Prophecies of peace are authenticated only in their fulfillment.*

Romans 7:1-13 ~ *Only death can free us from the power of sin working through the Law.*

Matthew 10:34-42 ~ *New life in the Kingdom comes when Jesus' hearers die to the old world.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** Dying to Live

Jeremiah warned the prophet Hananiah that his easy message of "Peace" at a time when the people were turned away from God would not lead to life but to death. St. Paul clearly connected the power of death over us with sin in our lives working through the Law of God. Jesus cautioned his disciples that looking for peace and life without facing off against the sins and temptations of the world would result in the loss of the crown of eternal life

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Most gracious God, you often hide your purpose in unrecognizable ways. Help me always look behind the obvious to see your hand of love hidden even in strife and conflict. Help me see the rebirth of my life through Jesus' death, and find renewal in the sorrow of my repentance. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** If we could truly see our lives from their fulfillment, we would consider all our goods as instruments in service to God's tasks.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** All we have and all we are,  
We dedicate to You, O Lord;  
Sanctify us for Your tasks  
That serving You is our reward. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** A prayer attributed to St. Francis ends with the words: "it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." Life is best understood looking from the end, backwards to the beginning. Prophecies are only known to be true when they are fulfilled; the effects of sin are not appreciated until it has put us to death. Jesus said that we only find life when we lose it! The life of faith is a journey in the dark, with only the light of Christ's empty tomb before us. In Christ we can see our present in the perspective of His death, and our future in the certainty of His resurrection.

**Questions to Consider:** To whom must the Law be preached? And why?

- Why is the prophecy of peace only proven in its fulfillment?
- How have believers been set free from the law of sin and death?
- Describe what it looks like to lose your life for Jesus' sake.
- What does your present life look like in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection?

**Bonus on next page:** Facing the prospect of death gives new perspective to life.

## Re-Connecting

*Who can I call?*  
She asked  
as she wheeled me to the ER  
I simply shook my head

*Surely there is someone  
someone who ought to know*  
No one  
*Wife?*  
Estranged  
*Parents?*  
Long dead  
*Children?*  
Alienated  
*Friends?*  
Out of touch  
*Chaplain?*  
Who cares  
*I'm so sorry*

In my heart I knew  
how it had come to this

Once I had stayed in touch  
but time moved on and so did I

Preoccupied with my life  
I shut others out - did my own thing

I looked at life my way  
couldn't bridge the gap - no compromise

some had died  
friends lost interest  
family turned away

I resolved  
Time to reconnect  
if I survive