

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn

for the

Twentieth Sunday After Trinity

-WEDNESDAY-

He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. – Matthew 10:38.

The cross of which our Savior here speaks is every hardship, tribulation, or persecution that we believers must bear because we follow Him, our “*good Shepherd*” (John 10:11a), in His Word of truth and grace as His dear “*sheep*” (John 10:27). When we follow Jesus in His Word, we shall have a cross to bear, for the devil hates us, the world persecutes us, and our own flesh troubles us in many ways. The cross with which our Savior was afflicted “*for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2b) casts its shadows over us believers, and brings pain and affliction to those who follow Jesus in His Word. In John 15, Jesus taught this never-changing truth: “*Remember the word that I said unto you --The servant is not greater than his Master. If they [those who are unbelieving and worldly] have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you*” (v. 20a). And whoever does not willingly take this cross, and refuses to follow Jesus in His Word, is not worthy of Him; he cannot be His disciple. For if we wish to be exempt from this cross, we can accomplish this only by no longer following Christ in His Word. Whoever would lead a life that is agreeable to his “*flesh*” (Romans 8:8a) and would try to find happiness by throwing off the cross of Christ, “*cannot please God*” (v. 8b), and will lose even this fleshly happiness in the “*torments*” of hell (Luke 16:23). But whoever is willing to lose his earthly life for Jesus' sake (as was the case with John the Baptist and Stephen), will continue to have, by God's grace alone, this spiritual and eternal life from his dear Savior. The Apostle John wrote in his Gospel: “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (3:36). In continuing gratitude for God's “*mercies*” (Romans 12:1a) toward us in Christ Jesus, let us thankfully confess with the Apostle Paul: “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21).

PRAYER – Lord Jesus, my Savior, without Thee I would have no true hope; without Thee I would be forever lost. Help me and strengthen me to grow in more willingly enduring whatever suffering and persecution come into my life because I am one of Thy dear sheep, wanting more and more to faithfully follow Thee in Thy Word until I am with Thee in the glories of heaven. Amen.

What God ordains is always good, His loving tho't attends me;
no poison can be in the cup that my Physician sends me.

My God is true; each morn anew; I'll trust His grace unending; my life to Him commending.

TLH, 521, 3

Scripture Reading for Wednesday: Hebrews 2:11-15

Theme for week: Sanctification