

Life Sunday Sermon 2023

Psalm 41:1-2 – “Blessed for Life.”

Rev. Dr. Gregory R. Truwe, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cole Camp, Missouri  
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“Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health” (Psalm 41:2).

In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A biblical, Christian view of life begins and ends with Christ.

We learn to value life from the moment of fertilization, for example, because the Son of God, who was God and is God, took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), and was in-fleshed in the womb of Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as a real life human when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

We learn from Christ to value the human body, for His was fearfully and wonderfully made, knit together (Psalm 139:14) by the Father, and at His baptism was anointed by the Holy Spirit and was, in fact, the temple of God, and therefore, worthy to be honored and treated as holy by His followers even after His death and burial. So, also, are the bodies of all human beings created in the image of God, for they, too, are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Father, as He knits them together in their mothers’ wombs. And more than that, the bodies of the baptized, by having the Holy Spirit indwell them, are also temples of God to be treated as holy in the sight of God and not just shells to be disregarded.

We learn from the universal atonement which Christ accomplished by His death on the cross that God the Father Almighty loves humanity. He loves all of humanity and desires for all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), which is why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2). Rich or poor, young or old, male or female, a child in the womb or a great grandpa whose body has grown weak, we learn a biblical, Christian view of life from Jesus Christ Himself, who, in His body and

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soul together, has fulfilled and carried out the words of Psalm 41:1-2, our theme passage for this year’s Life Sunday. “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him.”

Before we consider how we might care for the weak and lowly among us, we must hear these words and apply them to Jesus. “Blessed is the One who considers the poor!” He is the One who considers the poor. And the weak. And the lowly. He is the One who sees a sinful, wretched humanity, dead in our trespasses and sins, following the course of this (sinful) world and being led by prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:1-3) in his domain of darkness (Colossians 1:13), but who sees our helpless, sinful condition not as a reason to avoid us and stay away. But rather, He is the One who sees our sin and our lost and condemned situation as the very reason He comes down to earth to be our Savior. He does not only consider those who are poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), as we might give consideration to a person’s situation and then decide whether or not it is worthy of any action. But rather, His consideration is what causes Him to act on the day of trouble, in order to deliver the poor and the lowly. He considers us – chief of sinners though we be – and because of His eternal, divine love for us, He simply must act to bring about our deliverance. “Blessed is the One who considers the poor!”

Oh, the depth of the love of God revealed in this person, Jesus Christ, who will endure even hatred and betrayal in order to act in love and deliver the lives whom the Father formed and knit together in the wombs of their mothers. On the night He was betrayed, after washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus quoted a portion of this Psalm in reference to Judas Iscariot and the act of betrayal which he was soon going to bring about: “The Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate

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my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he” (John 13:18b-19).

The One who came because of His love and consideration for a lost and condemned people is He who would have Judas, His own disciple, who had received His love and hospitality – who ate His bread! – rise up against Him and, as the Psalm confesses, lift up his heel against Him to strike Him with an act of betrayal by handing Him over to those who would crucify Him. This is how He loves us to the end (John 13:1), when He who knew no sin became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and was delivered up to His enemies for our trespasses (Romans 4:25), to be crucified for our deliverance.

And even then, in His suffering and death, He would only act in love toward those who had become His enemies. When being reviled, He did not revile. When suffering, He did not lash out with wild threats. But He continued entrusting Himself to the Father who judges justly as He bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. For by this act of loving deliverance and the wounds which He earned in the process, the lowly of this world have their healing (1 Peter 2:23-24).

Jesus knew that His vindication would come. He knew that there was simply no need to depart from the acts of love which the Father had given Him – acts to which He was completely obedient, even to the point of death. He knew that He could bear all the pain and the hatred and the vengeance that sinful humanity could dish out because, in the end, He would be vindicated, and His death would give way to life. The Psalm confesses that, too!

“But you, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them! By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me” (Psalm 41:10-11).

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What looked like defeat would become His vindication, as in His resurrection, He would be glorified and revealed to the world as victorious. The LORD had indeed upheld Him because of His integrity, and the Father accepted His perfect self-sacrifice. His resurrection is the revelation of His victory over sin, death, and the devil. But it also reinforces the value of the lives that He came to save. The One who considers the lowly of this world is He who is risen from the dead. And now, in His ascension, He reigns in the presence of the Father (Psalm 41:12b) with all things under His foot.

And so we continue to learn from Him a biblical, Christian view of life. Though we were lowly, the chief of sinners, He considered us worthy to come and give His life so that we would be rescued and redeemed. Is there anyone among us who is outside of this love of Christ? Is there anyone in our community for whom Christ’s death was not suffered? Is there anyone whom the LORD God does not want to comfort with the preaching of the resurrected Lord Jesus?

What about those among us who are stricken by guilt or shame because of the lives they have already taken when they were given bad advice or didn’t understand the consequences of their terminal actions? Blessed is the One who considered such a person worthy to come and shed His blood so that they too would be delivered from guilt and shame with the promise of life in the forgiveness of sins.

What about those who have been given a terminal diagnosis, who are stricken with poverty, who have suffered the loss of a spouse, who are enduring mental disability, or who have endured the hostility of others? Blessed is the One—Jesus Christ—who has given His body into death so that these very people would know that nothing can separate them from the love of God (Romans 8:39).

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What about those whose children have abandoned the faith? What about those who suffer temptations which cause their consciences to be stricken or which make them embarrassed?

What about those who think that there is no room for them in the Church? What about those who have suffered acts of violence or hatred or even betrayal from the hands of those who claim the name of Christ? Blessed is the One and only Jesus Christ, who teaches us with His life and with His love, who redeems the lost with His death, and who renews the troubled with His resurrection. Blessed is the One who brings forgiveness to the nations by baptizing them and identifying them as those loved by God. Blessed is the One who feeds the lowly among us with His very Body and Blood, so that those who receive His Holy Communion might be raised up with Christ and united to Him, and thus might be those who also consider the lowly.

For if the love of God in Christ is for us—it is also for all. And so we learn from Christ a biblical, Christian view of life. And this biblical, Christian view of life considers the poor and the lowly, regardless of their sins, as those, like us, whom the Father has formed and the Son has redeemed—and that makes them worthy of our love and compassion. In the name of ✠ Jesus. Amen.