

Today we are looking at Mark 8:35: *“If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life.”*

The idea of losing life and gaining life is repeated many times in all four Gospels. I read that this is the most recorded of all of the things that Jesus said. The wording is slightly different here and there, but the theme remains the same: losing and gaining life.

I am going to have a Sermon Assistant come and help us begin to think about what that means. [Drew Anderson – Matthew Johnson], would you come and give me some much needed assistance...

- ✓ Pretend to Drive
- ✓ “I am in charge... I go when I want... I go where I want... my life is my own...
“Honk! Honk! Out of my way!”
- ✓ Signs: Road out... Roadblock... Detour... Bridge out... End of the road!
- ✓ We realize that we need someone else in the driver’s seat of our lives.
- ✓ So we get on our knees and say, “Lord, I ask you to guide my life. The driver’s seat is yours. Where you lead, I will follow.”

Jesus said, time and again: *“If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life.”*

If, by grace, we step out of the driver’s seat... What does that look like? What does it look like to live a life guided by Jesus?

Our vision statement says there are three important parts of our spiritual life. There is Proclaiming, there is Living, and there is Caring. Let’s take a look at each of those with Jesus in the driver’s seat.

Losing our Life by Proclaiming the Gospel

There is nothing greater than knowing the One who creates us, forgives us, and sustains us. To know who does these three things is salvation and life. Let me try to put a personal touch on what this means...

This day my wife's mother, Eileen, is in the last stages of her earthly journey. She is dying of cancer. My wife is with her.

It is tough. But we can go through these days because Eileen knows that God creates her life. And Eileen knows that God does not believe in disposable people. God creates people for eternity.

Even though her body is wasting away, we remember the witness of St. Paul who said: *"We do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day."* [1 Corinthians 4:16]

It is tough. But we can go through these days because Eileen knows that Jesus forgives her.

From her bed she looks up and sees Jesus looking back. Jesus is saying to her, *"Take heart; your sins are forgiven."* [Matthew 9:2]

It is tough. But we can go through these days because Eileen knows that the Holy Spirit sustains her.

I read this week that we have enough oil to last somewhere between 70 and 140 years. I was telling one of my kids about a record I used to listen to, and they asked, "What is a record?" My great grandchildren will be asking, "What is a barrel of oil?"

Oil will not always sustain us. Does that make us anxious? Yes, and no. We are people who believe that the Holy Spirit of God sustains, whether it be 70 years from now, or today.

Jeremiah, in a time when his world was being turned downside up – and upside down – wrote these words to his God: *“Your words are what sustain me; they are food to my hungry soul. They bring joy to my sorrowing heart and delight me. How proud I am to bear your name, O Lord.”* [Jeremiah 15:16]

Even when we, like Eileen, lay on our death beds, we are lifted up by the fact that God creates us for eternity, Jesus forgives us, and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

We are called to lose ourselves so that we can live this life, and present and interpret this message. It can be done.

At the YMCA on Mondays I have heard people talking about Church. Several times I have overheard the words, “At Church yesterday...” What a simple and natural way to present the Good News.

So maybe this week you will have a chance to present the story. “Sunday in Church we had [Drew – Matthew] driving their own life in front of the Church. Then they crashed!”

The person you are talking to asks, “What does that mean?” Now you move on to the second part, which is interpreting. You might say something like this...

“We were talking about what it means to lose our life and save our life. Sometimes we need to lose in order to gain. Like losing a pound or two, so we can do some new things – like see our toes! When we lose some of ourselves we see Jesus – and there is room for him to fill our lives in great ways.”

When we interpret for others, we also interpret for ourselves. That is when we grow. Jesus invites us to let him guide us in our proclaiming of the Good News. We can do this!

Losing our Life by Living in Christ

This part of our spiritual life is about growing. Speaking of growing, last Wednesday evening we invited fifteen 7th Graders into the Confirmation program! You may see some of them this morning around the sanctuary busily filling in the SermonNotes. They are growing in Christ big time for the next three years.

Those SermonNotes in every bulletin – they are to help all of us grow. We grow in Christ through messages, through Bible reading, through fellowship with other Christians.

I want to invite some of you to grow through a Bible study beginning this week called “Chasing Daylight.” Turn your attention to screen, for an overview of the course by the author, Erwin McManus.

The 10 week course has a beginning and an ending video each week, with discussion in between. The class meets Thursdays at 10:30 am or 7 pm. I invite you to come and be a part.

When we move out of the driver’s seat – when we lose our life for Jesus’ sake – we take opportunities to grow in Christ.

Losing our Life by Caring for our Neighbors

How important is it to you to care for your neighbors? I heard a story that challenged me to be more focused in commitment to missions. Here is the story...

A ship was wrecked during a storm at sea. Two men were able to swim to a small island. The two survivors prayed to God.

Being a Lutheran and a Presbyterian, they decided to find out whose prayers were more powerful. They agreed to divide the island, and see whose prayers were answered.

The first thing they prayed for was food. The next morning, the first man saw a fruit-bearing tree on his side of the land. The other man's parcel of land remained barren.

After a week, the first man was lonely. He prayed for a wife. The next day, another ship was wrecked, and the only survivor was a woman who swam to his side of the island.

The first man prayed for a house, clothes, more food. The next day all of these were given to him. The second man still had nothing.

Then the first man prayed for a ship, so that he and his wife could leave the island. In the morning, he found a ship at his side of the island. The first man boarded the ship with his wife. He decided to leave the second man on the island. After all, none of his prayers had been answered; he must be unworthy.

Just then the first man heard a voice from heaven: "Why are you leaving your companion on the island?"

The first man answered: "I prayed, my prayers were answered. His prayers were all unanswered."

Then God said, "Your companion prayed only one prayer, which I answered. He prayed that all of your prayers would be answered." That is caring for our neighbors.

When Jesus is in the driver's seat of our lives, more and more we act for the sake of others. We understand that if not for Jesus, we would have nothing. Because of Jesus, we have more than enough to share.

The most repeated of all of Jesus' statements: *"If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will find true life."*

Let those words be in our hearts this week. May we lose enough of ourselves this week, that you may see a little more of Jesus. Amen.