



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- Sunday Reminscere (RH4) 2018

*What can man give  
in exchange for his soul?*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mark 8, 27-38:

- <sup>ESV</sup> <sup>27</sup> And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"
- <sup>28</sup> And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."
- <sup>29</sup> And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."
- <sup>30</sup> And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.
- <sup>31</sup> And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.
- <sup>32</sup> And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
- <sup>33</sup> But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."
- <sup>34</sup> And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- <sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.
- <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?
- <sup>37</sup> For what can a man give in return for his life?
- <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, let Your Word be a light in our hearts so that we will deny ourselves, the life we had envisaged for ourselves, and take up our cross and follow You! Amen.*

### • **Dear Beloved of the Lord!**

- Dreams for our life! We have them- visions for our life! We all have a perception, at least a vague idea where we want to be. We don't always know how to get there,

but I think its safe to say, that we have them. Its part of our being, that we can dream of the future and reflect on our past. We need this kind of purpose in our lives, otherwise we would be floating around like a tyre-tube in the sea.

• Abram and Sara also had their ideas of how their life should go. But, we have heard, God comes to them and massively interferes in their lives. They are being told, to leave their family, the place where they were living and wanted to raise their children, which they didn't have yet. God attached a formidable blessing to the covenant He made with Abram [Gen 12,2-3]: *"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

• God gave Abram a vision for his life, a promise, sealed by a covenant! But, God did not tell Abram all the details of the way! He didn't tell him that even his name would change from Abram to Abraham. He didn't tell Abram that only when he would be 100 years and Sarah 90 years old would Sarah conceive their first-born child!

• One thing was certain though, God was keeping His promise. Abraham and Sarah went many detours, tried to help God along with keeping His promise by organising a surrogate wife Hagar to be able to start the family which God had promised would become so large that it would be a blessing for all nations! But God said to Abraham, no, that son, Ishmæl, does not count. Only the one born from you and Sarah, the child of the promise will begin the family I was promising you.

• Then, indeed, at last the son was born. At last. But we know after some years, God came to Abraham and tested him heavily when he told Abraham to take his son and sacrifice him on the mountain Morijah. The very seed of the promise, the son who personified God keeping His promise he, Abraham, had to go sacrifice on God's command! What an indescribable situation! What a turn of events! Did God tell Abram about this detail of his road with the Lord?

• No. He didn't. He gave Abram the broad promise which Abraham would never see fulfilled as long as he lived! And yet, Abraham believed God and trusted Him. And we also need to take note that he would never settle in the promised land. Yet, he would be buried in a small piece a small portion, one acre of land near Mamre of the promised land. He would be buried in the land of promise!

• So, what happened to Abram's life which he must have dreamt about? He lost it! To follow the promise of God! Was it an easy road, everything going smooth? Not at all! There were many afflictions, many tests, many waiting and waiting and in the end he would be buried in the land of promise. However, he had learned to trust God and we hear, "*Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*"

• He had a blessed life and end. Not the life he had envisaged, but a life driven by God's promise! God's promise gave His life purpose!

• Now, we also, we have a covenant with God. God made one with us. In Baptism God's name was placed over us and on us. Just like when Abram became Abraham, God took possession of us. He put us on another path, not remaining or returning to the land of our dreams, the life or lifestyle of our dreams, but He put us on the path to the promised land!

• In Baptism we died and were buried in the death of Christ. Since that day Jesus taught us and kept us, to follow Him, to keep our mind on the things of God, and not of man. Yes, this means, we are loosing the life our old Adam wanted to live! Maybe, our old Adam wanted to gain the whole world, wanted to become famous, by hook or by crook. Maybe my old Adam wanted me to make it to the top, at least to strife high in terms of being honoured and applauded by man.

• Most certainly the life my old Adam envisaged for myself never ever included any form of suffering and affliction. OK, maybe some affliction, but then I would have conquered it and never succumbed to it. I would have conquered it to save my life at all cost.

• So, we can understand Peter, who follows the Lord, but initially tries to resist this way to the promised land. He tried to throw a detour around the Cross. But Jesus was taking aim straight at the cross! That is where He was pushing, to fulfil God's promise for our new lives in Christ!

• Being baptised into the new covenant of God to finally bring us to the eternal promised land does not mean that our lives will be free of crosses and afflictions! The opposite. God aims our path straight through these burdening times.

• For what reason? What does He have in mind with us?

• The Epistle Reading gives us the answer [Rom 5,1-5]: "*Therefore, since we have*

*been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

- Sufferings produce endurance. Burdens to our soul makes it fit, makes it more tough to withstand the onslaughts of evil and that gives us a Christ-like character, namely one that will increasingly trust in the Lord, come what may. God shapes our character, our life through the cross which produces steadfastness in faith. Just like exercise is good for our body to strengthen it and keep it in shape. In the same way God trims and exercises our soul to give it a steadfast character that will become tough and steady in hope.
- This steadfast hope-character that God creates in us through taking up our cross and following Him, through God allowing burdens to lie on us for longer times, does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
- You see, those who want to take the easy road around the cross and affliction will never be strengthened and shaped to have this steadfast character of Christ-like faith. They are in great danger of losing their soul!
- That is why Jesus, who interfered in our lives, who interferes again in our life today and leads us back onto His path to the promised land. He teaches us to follow Him through deep afflictions, crosses and many burdens because this is the right path which will take us to a death and burial in Christ, forever secured in the promised land!
- Those who lose their own desired life, will find a life of steadfast hope in Christ. Hope based on substance not on speculation or human promises, but based on the promise of God. This life under the cross is a life of peace of with a good conscience, a life of mercy and deep inner joy, a life where we begin to rejoice in the midst of sufferings, the beginning of true LIFE. To God, be glory, forever and ever! **Amen.**
- *Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.** (Eph 3,20-21)*