

## DEVOTIONAL: 4 – 10 February 2024

### *The Only Life that Matters*

**Read: Mark 8:31-38**

Jesus is once again teaching us in today's gospel reading. And it's basically this: that the most important stuff in this life ... can't be found in the stuff of this life. That the only life that really matters ... is found by giving up the life that we think really matters. That Jesus is right when he says that the only way to save our life, or to find it, is by losing it, for his sake. It is confusing, and it is paradoxical, but it is true. I've learned it in powerful ways over the years and I find myself having to keep learning it.

Think with me about what we can learn about all of this from the life that Jesus lived. I believe that there is no one who has ever walked this earth who has lived a more meaningful life. Jesus knew who he was and what he wanted, and he lived the life that he knew he was supposed to live, the life that he was born to live. Jesus wasn't disappointed in himself or in his life. It was just the way it was meant to be. It wasn't always easy, but it was always right. Jesus never got it wrong. And he lived his life exactly as God wanted him to.

How many of us can say that? If we're being honest, none of us. But think again about the life that Jesus lived. As meaningful as it was, and as fulfilled a life as he had, think of what he didn't have. Jesus never owned a home. The Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head. Jesus never traveled the world. He spent his whole life within walking distance of where he was born. The Bible does not say that Jesus was ever married; had children; was neither a husband nor a father. And obviously, because of the time in which he lived, Jesus never drove a car, or flew in an airplane. He never watched television, or rode a roller-coaster, or played a video game. And not only that, but his life was cut short when he was just 33 years old.

In modern human terms, Jesus didn't live a "complete life", by the measure of our modern world. But without a doubt, he lived a meaningful life. So, if Jesus is any guide, none of those things that he missed out on are necessary to live a meaningful life.

So, let's think about this a little differently. What gave meaning to Jesus' life? I think you can answer that by looking at today's gospel reading. Jesus lived his life based on his teachings in this gospel reading. He told Peter to set his mind on divine things, not on human things. That's what Jesus did. He lived every day with his mind set on divine things, on his divine purpose, on his relationship with his Heavenly Father.

And then he told the crowd that the only way to save their life is by losing it for his sake, and for the sake of the gospel. What does that mean? I think that it means that the only way to live a life of real meaning, the life for which we were created, and to which we are called, is by giving up on the life that this world thinks matters, and instead living the life that matters to God.

That's what Jesus did. And that's what he invites you and I to do. He invites us to find the only life that matters by losing the life our world thinks matters. He invites us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow him. Why? To save our lives. To find our true lives. The life that Jesus died to give us. Not just eternal life in heaven. But a meaningful, purposeful life here and now.

That's what Jesus wants for us. And why he invites us to take up our cross and follow him. Because that is the way to this wonderful, grace-filled, abundant life. The only way.

It's not easy to do this, however, partly because this world constantly tempts us to place our hope in the stuff of this world. Hope that we have control over. Hope that we can purchase or achieve. Not hope that depends on someone else. That's why it's tempting, isn't it? Tempting to place our hope in the stuff of this world? And we are bombarded with this temptation, every day in countless different ways, and we all fall into this temptation on a regular basis. I do, at least. And I daresay that you do, too.

The life that really matters is only found in Jesus. Our way, our truth, and our life. If I want to save my life, I must lose it, for Jesus' sake, and for the sake of the gospel. For what will it profit me to gain the whole world, but forfeit the only life that really matters?

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, may he find me, and each and every one of us, living the only life that really and truly matters. To the glory of God. Amen.

### YOU'RE NOT ALONE, LET US PRAY WITH YOU & FOR YOU

- I ask for prayers for three courageously, faithful, committed, inspiring women that God has blessed and affirmed in my life and ministry, as each one journeys with various forms of brain cancer: **Ms. Linda Smith, Ms. Sandy Wamser, and Ms. Cheryl Woychick**. Loving God, let your love be close to your daughters today. Let your presence fill them with faith and hope, knowing that your power is greater than any cancer and You are with each of them as they continue to fight the good fight to free their body of this disease. Merciful Jesus, strengthen them and shower them with compassion; may you touch their hearts with healing. Amen.
- **Mr. Tom Damp** ask that I share the blessings and power of prayer. He is receiving in-home healthcare that is allowing him to stay in his home. Mr. Tom extends his sincerest gratitude for the prayers that were prayed to have this blessing to occur. Thank you is a simple word, but Mr. Tom extends it wholeheartedly and sincerely to each of you. Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of life and for all who help us sustain it. We thank you for the gift of health and ask for strength and healing. For those who face the challenges of illness, may you touch their hearts with healing. May they and their families and friends be inspired by your grace and mercy. Amen. Card and noted can be mailed to: **Mr. Tom Damp, 1707 Sunset Ridge Drive, West Bend WI 53095**.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis** is recovering from a cardiac procedure and has returned home; he is recovering comfortably. Precious Lord, we entrust the recovery of Mr. Len into Your hands. May Your healing power bring swift and complete restoration. Grant Mr. Len and Ms. Shelia strength, patience, and a spirit of resilience during this time of recovery. Let Your love be a source of unity and hope during this time. Thank You for Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Please extend prayers of encouragement and support to: **Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis**,
- **Mrs. Nancy Whitson** extends her grateful appreciation to you for taking the time to send cards of love and support. Cards and notes of encouragement and support can be mailed to: **Mrs. Nancy Whitson, Aria of Brookfield, 18740 West Bluemound Road, Room 103, Brookfield, WI 53045**.
- **Bro. Bob Krell** is deep-rooted in our hearts and prayers as we shower him and the Family with our love, care, and support. Lord Jesus Christ, by your patience in suffering you hallowed earthly pain and gave us the example of obedience to God's will. Be near me in my time of weakness and pain; sustain me by your grace, that my strength and courage may not fail; heal me according to you will; and help me always to believe that what happens to me here is of little account if you hold me in eternal life, my Lord and my God. Amen. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Mr. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090**.
- **Mrs. Sandy Wamser** is grateful for your continued prayers, support, and love Ms. Sandy was diagnosed with aggressive Glioblastoma. Ms. Sandy has resumed chemotherapy in addition to Tumor Treating Fields (TTF) Therapy. Dear Lord, we ask with all our heart, please touch these special lives, Ms. Sandy and Mr. Pat. Bless them with courage and hope, may they find comfort and consolation in your loving embrace. We earnestly pray for healing in body, mind, and spirit. Let their hope shine a hallowed light that burns forever to honor their spirited fight. Cards and notes can be sent to: **Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095**.
- On February 2, 2024, God looked around his Garden and found an empty place. He then looked down upon God's earth and saw **Mrs. Margaret "Marge" Louise Pok's** loving face. God put his arms around her and lifted her to rest. God's Garden must be beautiful, God always takes the best. Ms. Marge left us precious memories, her love will be our guide; you'll live on through your children, you'll always be by our side. It broke our hearts to lose you, but you did not go alone.

For part of us went with you on the day God called you home. Mr. Dean, Ms. Carol, and Family, we extend our sincerest and heartfelt sympathies to you all. The Family has planned a Celebration of Life Service for Mr. Jerry and Mrs. Marge Pok on Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church. The Visitation will be from

- noon until 2:00 p.m., with a Celebration of Life Service, cake, and refreshments following services. Cards of love and support can be mailed to: **Mr. Dean and Mrs. Carol Pok, 1915 Hwy 28 E., Kewaskum, WI 53040.**
- With sincerest heartfelt sadness and condolences to Mr. Dean Pok, Mrs. Carol Pok, and the Pok Family, we share the passing of their patriarch, **Mr. Jerry Pok** who God whispered his name on January 23, 2024, and lovingly welcomed Mr. Jerry to his eternal home. Let us pray: Jesus, I feel such absence, please be present. I feel such loss, please be here. I feel such sadness, please be my sanctuary. I feel such pain, please be with me. Jesus, I feel such loneliness, please be beside me. I feel such heartache, please be close. I feel such doubt, please be faithfulness. I feel such guilt, please lead me home. The loss has consumed me. I come as I am. Please be my everything. I just take your hand. Amen. Cards and notes of condolences can be mailed to: **Mr. Dean and Mrs. Carol Pok, 1915 Hwy 28 E., Kewaskum, WI 53040.**
  - Ms. Dina Roberts, daughter of **Mr. Wallace (Wally) and Mrs. Geraldine (Gerry) Ritterbusch**, prayerfully and hopefully ask that we shower her dad, Mr. Wally, with 100 birthday cards in Celebration of his **100<sup>th</sup> birthday**, (**Mr. Wally's Birthday is February 29<sup>th</sup>**), **during the week of February 22<sup>nd</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>.** Please mail Birthday and Celebration cards to: **Mr. Wallace (Wally) and Mrs. Geraldine (Gerry) Ritterbusch, 524 Tamarack Court, West Bend WI 53095.**
  - **Mr. Gerald Wallace "Jerry" Loebe's** Celebration of Life Service will take place on Friday, February 2nd at Living Hope Presbyterian Church, (Dickson Hollow) W156 N4881 Pilgrim Rd from 10:00 AM until the time of memorial service at 11:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial in memory of Mr. Jerry to Milwaukee Rescue Mission.
  - Losing a beloved sister-in-law is one of life's greatest tragedies. We extend our heartfelt sympathies and love to Mrs. Betty Clement and her brother-in-law, Mr. Donald L. Wachuta for their loss of **Mrs. Pattie C. Wachuta**. Please know that we are always here for you, Ms. Betty, and Mr. Donald during this difficult time. Whatever you need, we're here to help in any way that we can. Gracious God, source of all life, we come before You in somber hearts. We grieve the death of our Ms. Pattie and entrust her soul unto Your divine hands. Give us, O Loving God, strength to accept this loss and remember her life fondly. May our prayers guide her on the journey to Your heavenly kingdom where she may find eternal peace. As written in Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Be our comfort, blessed Provider, in this time of sorrow. Amen. Cards of condolences can be mailed to: **Mrs. Betty Clement, 6822 Enge Drive, West Bend, WI 53090, and Mr. Donald Wachuta, 7180 N. River Road, West Bend, WI 53090.**
  - We extend our condolences to Mrs. MaryLou on the passing of her brother, **Mr. Ralph Gelhar**, on January 20th. Our thoughts prayers and love are showered on Ms. MaryLou during this season of grief and loss. Please send cards and notes of care and love to: **Mrs. MaryLou Himes, 1800 Annie St. #, WB 53090.**
  - We continue our prayer vigil for **Mr. Dennis Liepert** on his extensive journey of recovery. Creator God, your children humbly come as intercessory for Bro. Dennis and Ms. Tammy to ask that You would work a full recovery in Bro. Dennis' body - whatever is causing this persistent problem. We believe and look forward to better times for them. Give Bro. Dennis strength and encouragement; he can endure anything with You by his side. We pray that You would, in Your mercy, give him back the health and strength he needs. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Cards and notes of love and support can be mailed to: **Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Tammy Liepert, 7361 Tower Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.**
  - Healing and supporting prayers for **Mr. Robert (Bob) and Mrs. Joy Kuhaupt**. Both Mr. Bob and Ms. Joy are experiencing significant health challenges and ask for your caring and supportive prayers. Card and notes can be mailed to: **Mr. Robert and Mrs. Joy Kuhaupt, Sussex Mills Apts., W240 N6345 Maple Ave., #116, Sussex, WI 53089.**
  - **Mrs. MaryLou Himes** is still recovering from eye surgery but 50% of her eyesight has returned; the ophthalmologist feels more of her eyesight may return as healing continues. Ms. MaryLou will still have to have another eye surgery soon. We beseech You, Lord, to touch the body and eyes of the Ms. MaryLou with Your healing hand. Guide the process of recovery, restoring vision and optimal health. Lord, during this period, we ask that you grant Ms. MaryLou the gift of peace that calms worries, and the patience to wait for Your perfect timing. Holding on to this faith, we offer up this prayer in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Cards and notes of encouragement can be mailed to: **Mrs. MaryLou Himes, 1800 Annie Street, #4, West Bend, WI 53090.**

- **Ms. Mary Rogge** continues healing from Rotator cuff surgery. Ms. Mary is appreciative for your cards and notes of encouragement and love. We give God thanks for Mr. Roger and the Family, who are supporting and caring for Ms. Mary. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge, 4436 Magna Vista Drive, Jackson, WI 53037.**
- **Mr. Michael Cahoon**, son of Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and is still on a journey of treatments. We pray that You will bless the means used for Mr. Michael's recovery and those who administer them. Grant that his sickness may be to his spiritual benefit and that he may live the rest of his life more faithfully according to Your will. For You are the source of life and healing and to You we give praise and glory, now and forever. Amen. Cards and notes filled with prayers encouragement can be sent to: **Mr. Michael Cahoon, C/O: Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, 1615 Beverly Lane, WI 53090.**
- We give thanks and praise that **Mr. Ben Barth**, husband of Ms. Heather Wolf, granddaughter of Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge. recipient of a new heart and new lungs- give thanks for your continued prayers and support. O God, You have told me in your Word to "be strong and of a good courage" and to "fear not". You have said that "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. Please overwhelm Mr. Ben with cards and notes for continued healing, strength, and restoration. Correspondence can be mailed to: **Mr. Ben and Mrs. Heather Barth, 223 South 11<sup>th</sup> Ave., West Bend, WI 53095.**
- We remain in prayer and support for **Mrs. Ann Cording**. Thank You, Provider God, for giving me all that I need. Thank You for inviting me to come to You any time with all my needs and requests. Thank You for your Word to lead, guide, and direct me. Loving God, I come to You now asking for wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit for the decisions I have to make in my life. You have told me in your Word that if I lack wisdom I should ask because You give to all who ask for wisdom generously. Thank You for being true to your Word. In the name of Jesus, Amen. Cards and notes of love and care can be mailed to: **Mrs. Ann Cording, 1416 S. Silverbrook Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: **Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: [alankemp33@gmail.com](mailto:alankemp33@gmail.com); or cards and notes to **Mr. Allan and Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.**

*We continue to celebrate our 175<sup>th</sup> year of service, commitment and Methodism in West Bend, Wisconsin.*

*"Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Present, Anticipating Our Future"*

Prayer of Meditation: Have you ever been on a roller coaster at an amusement park? These rides are very similar to the Christian life...climbs and accelerations! First, there's time spent waiting in line. Like for Moses, who had to spend 40 years keeping sheep in the desert before returning to accomplish his call in Egypt, we don't know how long the waiting may last. God is preparing us, one step at a time, to enter the blessings of the exciting life that God has prepared for us.

Then comes the climbing. Oppositions are there, and everything is trying to pull us down. But God is pulling us up, towards our calling. He promised us: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) And then comes the moment of suspension just before being propelled forward by God, we're at the highest point, close to God. Finally, the moment of acceleration arrives! It's there that God chooses to "propel" us into the world to accomplish our calling: moving forward and blessing others.

To experience acceleration, the key is: waiting and holding on to God until God sends us.

Today, why not pray this short prayer for your life: "Lord, I trust You, no matter the step I'm currently going through. Your grace accompanies and equips me for the calling You have entrusted to me, and I can continue to move forward in the blessed, exciting life that You have for me. Amen!"

Have a beautiful day in God's presence!

***Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin***