

# Eastern Mission

## Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

March 2025

"The just shall live by faith." This phrase first appears in Scripture in a slightly different form in Habakkuk 2:4, and is quoted three times in the New Testament: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

How does this relate to us? We all want to live. This is right and good, since God is alone the Source and Author of life, both natural and spiritual. We read in Genesis 1 that God said, "Let there be...", and it was so. Thus, all life is by the Word of God. Our own life is the same "breath of life" that God breathed into Adam (Genesis 2:7). As believers in Christ, we value life and should do all we can, with the help of God, to stand up for life. Because we are living souls, no human being from the point of conception will ever cease to exist. As C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Weight of Glory*, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." So, in one sense, we all live and will continue to live forever.

But what is it really to live? Jesus said in John 12:25, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." How are we to understand this?

In Adam's fall, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" Romans 5:12. In our natural state, we are the living dead — alive in our bodies and minds and feelings, but dead to God in sin. What the world calls "living" is acting out this death, and without the intervention of God, we would continue in this death throughout eternity, to the most infinite degree in hell.

However, the life-giving Word, Jesus, became flesh as we are and gave up His life for us, as Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." However, He did not stay dead, but rose again the third day, thus proving that His death truly abolished sin and its penalty, death. All who are in Christ live through Him, both in this time, and in eternity — again, to the most infinite degree in heaven.

If we hold onto our own life in unbelief, we lose it; if we give up our own life to God in repentance and faith, we receive eternal life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. As Jesus had to give up His life to bring forth much fruit (increase) to God, so we also must die to ourselves to become partakers of His "abundant life" (John 10:10) and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. This is what Baptism is: dying with Christ and rising with Him to new life (see Romans 6:4) As Luther writes in the Small Catechism, "It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die, with all sins and evil desires; and again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

The Christian life is not about doing; it is simply to live in Christ. Good works will naturally follow — "The just shall live by faith." May we all be able to testify with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20.

God's Peace be with you!

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