

Trinity St. Luke's Lutheran Grade School
8th Grade Graduation June 3, 2011 7:00 p.m.
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz Revelation 2:10b



"Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life!"

This is God's Word!

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God – especially you 8th grade graduates:

For many of you – this journey began 14 years ago – 1997! You were very little people – six pounds or seven pounds or eight pounds. Some of you had lots of hair – and some of you had those little ribbon bands on your heads with little ribbon flowers. You wore little onsies with little covers for your hands – so you wouldn't scratch yourself with your little tiny finger nails so sharp. At first you were really helpless – unable even to roll over. In some ways that's when you were the easiest to take care of. Put you down and you stayed put! Then you started to roll – before anyone could believe it – you were crawling – pulling yourself up against the couch or the coffee table – and then sitting down on your padded little Pampers. You learned how to feed your self – picking up little Cheerio-s and little pieces of bread and cheese and all kinds of food in little pinches. You also learned how to push all the food off the tray of your high chair – for your puppy to eat. Your mommy and daddy – truth be told – were very happy to have you this small. They could protect you from all kinds of harm and danger. They would pack you up and haul you around. You would grab ahold of them – your pudgy arms around their neck and hold on tight. In many ways you were very safe. Today – not so much! Today you can talk and text on cell phones. You can go on the Internet and see all kinds of things. There are video games exceedingly violent. There are programs on cable TV that are nothing short of nasty! It is not easy to be 14 in our world today. But it's going to be ok – because it doesn't depend on us. It's going to be ok – God's Word tells us tonight because:

Jesus Keeps You Faithful!

- 1. We trust his wisdom and power**
- 2. We trust his mercy.**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on tonight is very comforting. Some people are kind of afraid to read the Revelation to St. John. They are afraid they are going to get all confused and off the track. While it's true the Revelation to John is in some parts not easy to understand – many parts are very simple and to the point. ⁹ **After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.** ¹⁰ **And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."** ¹¹ **All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living**

creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!"¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"¹⁴ I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¹⁵ Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."¹⁶ "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat."¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'" Revelation 7 That's pretty simple—isn't it? Our sins are all washed away because the Lamb of God died on the cross to forgive us! The second to last chapter of the Bible—Revelation 21 is powerful in its simplicity, too!¹ Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." Revelation 21 That's pretty much to the point, too, don't you think? There is heaven and hell. Those who remain in stubborn unbelief—who remain in their sins—will know the forever flames of Hell. That will be a horror beyond words. We know we will go to heaven when we die—because we are saved by grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone!

And so it's very fitting for your class verse to be Revelation 2:10. **Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life.** The last time I preached on this text—Revelation 2:10 was a Friday—August 3rd, 2007—almost 4 years ago. As long as I live—I will never ever forget that day. It was the funeral of Corporal Matthew Zindars. Matthew graduated from our Trinity St. Luke's Lutheran Grade School. Matthew's picture is by Mrs. Kiecker's desk. Matthew's picture is just through the doors in the back corner of the church. Be faithful unto death. When you are young and strong—it's tempting to think you are almost indestructible! It's tempting to think—oh I could sprain my ankle or wrench my knee. I could break my arm or maybe even rupture my spleen—but that's about the worse—and so? The fact is—children can die. When I was just 10 years out of high school—there were already a hand full of my classmates who had died. The fact is—I buried a 5th grader named Keith. I buried a little girl named Kelli—she was just three! People are very breakable! The worst danger is not that a tornado would touch down and you would be killed by flying debris! The worst danger is not that a cowardly terrorist would set off an explosion—and without warning you would be blown to smithereens? The worst danger is not physical at all—but *spiritual*—a threat to your faith—a danger to your immortal soul!

Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life! I was watching TV the other day—and heard about a little man named George Dawson. There is a middle school named

after him—George Dawson Middle School. Have you ever heard of George Dawson? I'm guessing not. He's not a singer on American Idol. He's not an inventor of some computer chip or computer game—or anything computer. George Dawson had relatives who were actually slaves. George Dawson was not someone who was highly educated. The fact is—George Dawson didn't know how to read or write. He actually got pretty good at covering up the fact that he couldn't read and couldn't write—until the time came for him to—I don't know—sign his name—and all George knew how to do was make an "X"! When George was almost 100 years old—he decided the time had come to learn how to read—so he could do what? So he could read the Bible! And that's what George did. He learned how to read so he could read his Bible. And George was such a powerful example—they named a school after him. And the people who go to that school—encourage one another. They say—if George could learn—we can, too! How wonderful is that? We have a much more powerful example than George Dawson. We have the example of the Lord Jesus—who came to save us. When Jesus is your example—you won't bully or tease anyone—you can't!

Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life! Imagine a man—about 7 years younger than I am—depressed and discouraged—walking out into the ocean—the water about 55°. What would you do? There is of course special training—how to save people in the cold water. There is special equipment—made specifically to rescue people—and at the same time keeping the rescuer safe, too! Oh, you could call the Coast Guard—that would sound like the right thing to do. The problem is—the water isn't deep enough for their really big ships. You could call the rescue guys that have a helicopter. That would be perfect. Except there's only one helicopter like the one you need—and they are already out—rescuing somebody else. And by the time they are done with that—they have to get more fuel—and by the time they are done with that—it's too late! By now—if you were a whole hour out in the water—some 75 people could be standing on the beach—watching. The problem is—there's nobody specially trained to save the guy out there—no special equipment. People are saying—if we go out there—we could be in danger. If we make a mistake—we could be sued—and that would be bad. And you know what happens—not so hypothetically? Somebody dies! Change the question—just a little bit. What if the person drowning was a child? What if the person drowning was somebody you knew? What if the person drowning was you? We were depressed and discouraged—drowning in sin and guilt! Jesus came to rescue us—not risking—but sacrificing his life to save us. Jesus was faithful to the mission His Heavenly Father sent Him on—to save us. And that's exactly what Jesus did. Jesus laid down his life to save us. Jesus is the one who not only calls us to faithfulness—Jesus is the one who makes us faithful—and by grace alone—gives us a crown of life. Eternity will not be too long—for us to thank and praise him for his faithfulness. Amen!

To God alone all glory!