



St John Lutheran Church

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"Faith: Gift of God" --Ephesians 2:8-9

Funeral for Guenther Erich Schauss

We gather today to celebrate. **At first this** sounds a little odd...**why would** we celebrate the passing of such a loved one as Guenther? **One who was** so important to his wife Christa...**to his** family gathered here...**to this** family of faith of which he was so much a part of for so long...**one who** was so important to so many in this community. **Why would we** celebrate the passing of one who meant so much to so many??

The Truth is that we are not celebrating Guenther's passing...**but we** are celebrating what he was ...**and what** he was given by God. **We are celebrating** the faith that God gave him...**the example** of faith he was to us all...**we are** celebrating that we indeed had Guenther among us for us to love and to have been loved by him! **And we dare** to celebrate even in the face of such grief because of the gift of faith our Lord gave to Guenther and to us!! **Paul writes to** the Ephesians: "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the Gift of God --not because of works, lest any man should boast. "**

But Scripture also declares "I am the Lord thy God, ...'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me'" (Exodus 20:2-3). **What does this** mean? **Simply this,** "We should fear, love and trust in God above all things." **God demands perfect** fear all the time and **perfect** love all the time and **perfect** trust all the time ...**perfect** faith. **Jesus, Who is God,** stated the same truth like this: "**Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind**" (Matthew 22:37).

Now you might be thinking to yourself...**well,** nobody is able to do that. **And this is** true... **most certainly** true... **absolutely true.** **Each one of** us has failed to have the kind of faith that God requires ... **this perfect** trust. **In fact, if** anyone thinks that he or she is able to keep the First Commandment perfectly... **then that** person is a liar. **So please understand** that faith that has its source ***in us*** falls short of the Lord's Commandment. **Faith that is** our doing doesn't get the job done. **God requires perfect** faith and we can't muster such a faith as that.

"God looks down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any that are wise, that seek after God.

**They have all fallen away;
they are all alike depraved;**

there is none that does good, no, not one." (Psalm 53:2-3)

But notice what our text declares, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the Gift of God --not because of works, lest any man should boast.**" Now dear friends, that is good news. **Faith is numbered** among the gracious gifts **that God gives.** **The faith that** will prevail unto eternity is **not man's work but God's bestowed blessing.** **Faith is not** a conscious decision of man... **but faith is a gracious benediction of and from God.** **Faith is not** a giving of one's heart to God lest any man should boast. **Rather faith is** God's gift wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Promise. "**No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit**" (1 Corinthians 12:3) and "**Without faith it is impossible to please God**" (Hebrews 11:6) and the faith that God requires **is the faith that God gives.**

The Lord God Almighty gave this gift of faith to Guenther when baby **Guenther was crucified with Christ in Holy Baptism in 1927 in Dresden Germany ... There Guenther received the gracious "washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace"** (Titus 3:5-6). **Baptism is not** man's work... **it is not** our doing...**but the gift of God...** **and at** that moment 81 years ago, the Lord gave the infant named Guenther Erich Schauss the gift of faith... **indeed, as Scripture says "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"**

(Mark 16:16); **"and this is not your own doing, it is the Gift of God -not because of works, lest any man should boast."** **This faith** the Christian has when an infant... **when asleep... when unconscious... when under anesthetics... when afflicted** with Alzheimer's Disease...**or a brain infection... when in** whatever awful pain and suffering. **This is so** because faith is not man's work but God's gift.

This faith is a trust that is focused on the Lord God and His promises.... **given in** His Word that are taught and proclaimed. **"So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ"** (Romans 10:17). **Guenther heard** the Word of Christ crucified for the sins of all people and trusted in the Lord and His Good News. **Guenther lived in** that truth about the Person and the Work of Jesus the Christ.

All the transgressions of God's Law ... **1st through** 10th Commandments ... **sins of** thought, word and deed ... **sins of** commission and sins of omission ... **sins of** weakness, ignorance, stupidity and willful disobedience ... **all were** placed upon the Incarnate Son of God as He faced death **in your** place in the Garden of Gethsemane **"and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground"** (Luke 22:44)... **when He** was scourged **in your stead** ...**as the** whip flayed His back open and His Blood poured forth on your behalf... **when the** King of kings received the coronation **you deserved****a plaited** crown of thorns jammed into place further spilling His Blood on your behalf... **when Jesus** was enthroned on the cross and all your sins became His ...**so that** all His perfect righteousness might become yours. **He endured hell** that you would not have to spend a single second in that Godforsaken place. **In truth, Jesus** was forsaken at the Place of the Skull so that you would be with Him forever in Paradise.

Dear People of God... **do you** not behold God's Grace? **The Father's Gift** is His Son. **The Son's Gift** is His Life. **The Holy Spirit's Gift** is faith given through this Good News. **Do you understand** what this means?

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the Gift of God -- not because of works, lest any man should boast." **This is the** faith that was given to Guenther and this is the faith that sustains us now. **Faith that trusts** in Christ for the forgiveness of sins...**faith to** trust that this is not the end for one of our beloved ...**faith to** see beyond our hurt and our tears and trust that we will see Guenther again because Christ's Promise is that we will live with Him forever!!

Christ is so offensive to so many because **His cross is** offensive to so many people... **but it** is there... **in the** suffering of Christ, that we are really able to find God in His Grace and mercy. **The Lord God** Almighty comes through weakness, pain and suffering ...**first on** the cross and then in the midst of our own weaknesses and suffering. **Therefore, for the** Christian, it is in times of personal suffering that the Lord God is closest. **That may not** make much sense but it is true... **Our gracious God** most clearly and surely manifests Himself to His people in weakness and suffering ...**first, in** Jesus' death on the cross ...**and then** in our weaknesses, pains, sorrows and sufferings in this life. **Perhaps for the** first time in your life... **here and** today in the midst of your grief and suffering... **you are** beholding God in His Grace and doing so with the tear-stained eyes of faith that God grants through His Word that you have just heard. **"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the Gift of God --not because of works, lest any man should boast. "** **All of his** life Guenther understood this. **And please note** here that most all of Guenther's life he was hail and hardy...**always very healthy...always vigorous** and strong...**at 81** years old he looked like he was 60...**and yet** he knew this day would come. **He knew that** his strength would not last forever...**but he** also knew that His Christ would never fail him...**he knew** that Christ's strength **DOES indeed last forever. So year in** and year out, without fail Guenther and Christa were here in God's house...**receiving God's** Grace and strength...**all of** God's blessing through His Word and Sacrament. **As strong and** hardy as Guenther was...**he never** ever thought he could go it alone...**he never** thought he could live without his Lord. **He may not** have talked about his faith all that much...**many of** us don't because it is so very personal...**but Guenther's** actions spoke volumes. **He and Christa** were always here in this place because this is where their Lord promised to meet them!!

And so year in and year out...**through thick** and thin our Lord strengthened their faith...**He held** them up and blessed them with His Peace and His Life. **And this was** especially true this past couple of very difficult weeks. **Our Lord was** always with Guenther...**He was** always with Christa...**and where** our Lord is...**there is** life and hope and His Divine Peace. **And this was** so very evident as Christa and the family were quite literally held up during this difficult time. **There were tears...and there** will be more tears...**but there** is not

hopelessness...**nor will** there be...**for in** the Lord there is always confidence and strength! **This is the** Christian faith. **This is the** faith God gave Guenther and the faith that Guenther lived all of his life...**and it** is this faith that sustains now and in the days to come. **For just as** our Lord Promises, the grave cannot hold us...**it cannot** hold Guenther because it could not hold our Lord. **We will see** Guenther again on that great day when our Lord comes for us all to take us to live in His Kingdom forever! In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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