

UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT DIES

Speaker: Assistant Spiritual Director

Time: Saturday 4:30 p.m.

Length: 30 minutes maximum

Purpose:

This talk introduces the theme for the TEC weekend: “By our Baptism, then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life.” (Romans 6:4)

If the Bible tells us the story of God’s promise—and how God keeps His promises throughout history—how does that story become our story? Since we are born children of a broken humanity, we are restored to God by “dying” to ourselves and to the sinfulness that breaks our relationship to God and one another. This spiritual death is Christ’s death in us, made ours in the promise of Baptism, which restores us to new life. “Our old being has been put to death with Christ on the cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be slaves of sin. . . . If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him” (Romans 6:6, 8). Christ takes our death upon Himself so that He can give us His own undying life. We live in this new life every day, by daily dying to ourselves so that the new creation in Christ can arise to grow in our understanding of who God is and who we are—God's workmanship.

Wheat Letters (letters from former TEC participants to this weekend) are introduced and explained as evidence of the care, concern, and sacrifice of other Christians for the benefit of TECites and Adult Observers. They are examples of Christians who are dying to self in order to share the love of Christ.

Outline: [Begin Your Talk Here](#)

Scripture Reading: John 12:23–26

Response (ALL): “A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies.” (John 12:24)

Introduction:

Jesus liked to speak in pictures. Let’s think about what a seed does. It must fall from the plant and die. It is buried in the ground before it can grow into a new, living plant. Jesus is talking about Himself in this passage. He is the grain of wheat who had to die and be put into the ground prior to His resurrection to new life. Jesus dies. But what Jesus sees in the grain of wheat, He sees in all of us. We are called to die as well—die to ourselves. What does it mean to die?

I. Death and Life

Most people consider death the end of life.

A. Death apart from Christ is death:

1. Physical—natural, the result of sin which leads to eternal death
2. Intellectual—stagnation; self-serving skepticism; focusing on the false

3. Social—excluding others; manipulation of others for benefit of self
 4. Spiritual—a deterioration of our use of God's grace; ultimate rejection of our relationship with God
- B. Death with faith in Christ is life. Death is not the end.
1. Physical—using our strength for others and finding joy as we await the resurrected body in heaven
 2. Intellectual—using our knowledge for the benefit of others, knowing God supplies all our needs
 3. Social—reaching out to others in Christian love, knowing we find abundant life through Christian fellowship
 4. Spiritual—dying to self (confession of sins, death of pride) in order that we experience the joy of Jesus living in us, anticipating eternity

II. Death and Resurrection: Life in the Body of Christ—the Church

- A. Jesus' resurrection isn't just something that happened 2,000 years ago. It is a reality we live every day. And we celebrate it every Sunday. Some even call Sundays "little Easters." Easter—and our own resurrection—is celebrated every Sunday when we make confession of our sins and receive forgiveness.
- B. We need to die to ourselves daily and rise with new life in Jesus Christ. How do you do that in day-to-day living?
1. Biblical and historical examples you look to
 2. Personal examples from your own life (How do you personally live in Christ's resurrection?)

III. The Potential Planted within Us

- A. A seed has the potential within it to produce life. But the seed needs to be buried in the soil, and water and light need to be added for new life to be produced.
- B. We are like the seed.
1. We fail to grow when we do not die to self. But we are forgiven.
 2. God places the potential within us in our Baptism, when He creates faith within our hearts.
 3. God provides ways for us to grow into that new life:

Like soil: opening up God's Word plants us within the story of God's total love for us.

Like water: remembering our Baptism nourishes us for daily life. "I am baptized into Christ!"

Like light: connecting with other followers of Jesus inspires us to grow in our daily journey.

Conclusion:

To live the ideal of the Christlike life means to die to self.

- A. Jesus, buried like a grain of wheat, sprang to life on the third day to give us salvation—forgiveness and new life in Him.
- B. We participate in that death and resurrection through Baptism—which not only grants us salvation but also raises us to new life, a life of love (Romans 6:4–8).
- C. As we die to self to serve others, we are encouraged by others who have died to self.

(Introduce Wheat Letters and read one.)

QUESTION (asked by Lay Director following this talk):

How are you willing to die to self today?