

Journey to the Cross Homily
King of Glory Lutheran
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God's grace and peace to you this day! Amen.

What an incredible journey of crosses and the stories they tell! Thank you again to all the people who have worked to share this worship service with us.

During Lent we are accustomed to keeping our eyes fixed upon the cross. We take up our Lenten disciplines knowing they fall far short of the sacrifice Jesus made to give up His life. Yet looking at, pondering and meditating upon Jesus' cross brings us closer to God's love demonstrated through Jesus' death.

Lutherans have a particular way of viewing the cross thanks to Martin Luther. He laid out 40 theses which he defended in the city of Heidelberg, May 1518. It is these 40 theses which have made perhaps the greatest impact upon our theology today. Luther made a distinction between a theology of the cross and a theology of glory. In no uncertain terms Luther said God is most clearly understood through the events of the cross.

When you and I think of people who hold positions of power, what comes to mind are corner offices with leather couches. Men and women dressed in fine clothes. Security guards in front and following close behind for protection. Large bank accounts and framed plaques on the walls noting degrees or accomplishments.

When God thinks of power, God sees the cross. God sees Jesus. God's ultimate power was and still is revealed in the form of Jesus dying on the cross. No security guards; only a dying man wearing a linen cloth and a bloodied crown.

This is so important for us to understand because Luther repeats what scripture says. God is revealed not in strength, but in weakness. Not in power and riches but rather in suffering. God is most clearly seen in places where we typically wouldn't expect to see God. God is revealed in prisons, in nursing homes, or at the border with immigrants. Where there is depression and unemployment, war and fighting, broken relationships or addictions, there we find God.

Listen to Paul's letter to the good people at the church in Corinth. Chapter 1 beginning at verse 18.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the

world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

Do you hear how backwards this sounds to our modern ears? The wisdom of the world, a theology of glory means human wisdom! "I can save myself through my reasoning and my own good deeds." A theology of glory is about riches and power! Not foolishness or weakness. And certainly not a dying man upon a cross. Yet we theologians and students of the cross, proclaim, Christ crucified!

What that means for us is this. We cannot by any power of our own, bring about our own salvation. Luther made clear our salvation - our being put right with God - happened when Jesus died upon the cross. We have no ability to justify ourselves before God with the good works we do. Any and all good works throughout the whole of our lives would never be enough to save us in God's sight. We are made whole, we are saved by God's grace, through Jesus' love as He died upon the cross.

As Paul said in Romans 7:18, "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

Instead we rely solely upon God's grace as it reads in Ephesians 2:8-9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast."

What incredibly Good News this is! As we continue to journey to Jesus' cross, we give thanks for the life giving power of that cross. We proclaim Christ crucified! Amen!