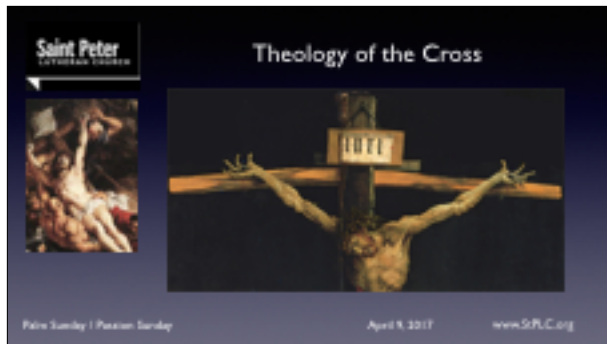


Today is a confusing day in the church calendar.
 It wasn't so confusing when I was younger.
 It actually was kind of simple.
 We called it Palm Sunday, and we remembered the Lord's last triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
 We processed in together, waving palm branches and singing praises.
 We remembered how (at least on that day) the crowds are delighted to have Jesus come to their city.
 Hoping, no doubt, that he is the Messiah.
 Who had come to drive the Romans out of Jerusalem.
 And allow God's people to live in freedom once again.
 These days it's not quite so simple.
 We begin as we did back then — and you and I celebrated the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem by processing from the labyrinth to the worship center at the beginning of our worship today.



But we quickly transitioned from Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday.
 Passion as in suffering and death.
 Passion as in the pain and agony that Jesus experiences during his last week of life.
 What years ago seemed like a fairly cheerful day,
 Has turned into a somber meditation,
 On the betrayal, humiliation, torture and death of Jesus.
 Not a pleasant conversation to have.
 But an important aspect of Jesus' life story for us to remember each year.



And an important aspect of what it means to experience Christian faith from a Lutheran perspective.

We are a cross-centered church.

I shared this with our Catechism students on Friday night.

We had gathered together to study the Passion of Jesus.

We looked at the Bible passages that tell this story.

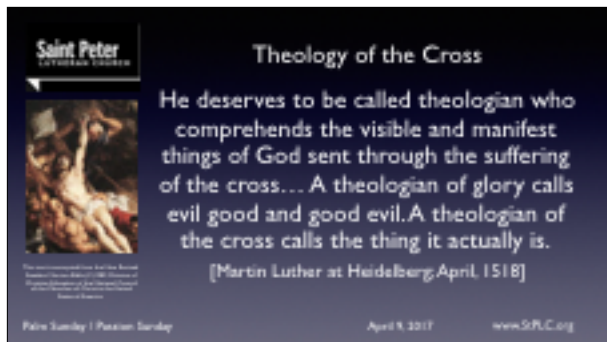
We talked about what it means that God loves us enough to become one of us.

That God even loves us enough to die for us.

And we remembered how many have described the Christian church as a community of faith, gathered at the foot of the cross.

There to honor the gift of Christ that is ours.

And to recognize that in our own brokenness — our own sinfulness — our only hope is in the power of God.



Luther talked about this some 500 years ago.

He called it the “theology of the cross.”

And he distinguished it from the “theology of glory.”

In a statement that many believe to be more important than his 95 Theses, Luther defended this understanding of our faith at a gathering of the Augustinian order in Heidelberg.

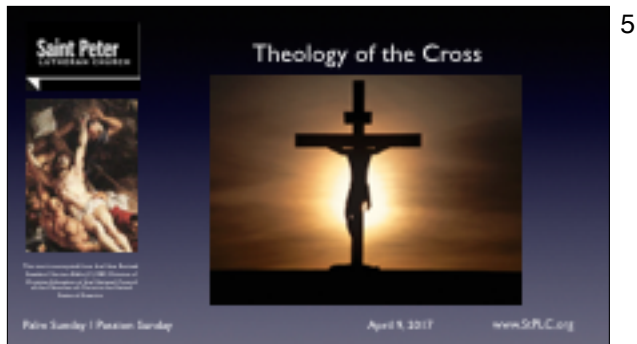
There were those in Luther’s time — and there are those today, Who imagine that proximity to God will lead to blessing,

success, prosperity and strength.

Luther called this a theology of glory.

Something contrary to Scripture.

A distortion of the essential Christian message.



Luther believed, instead, that God meets us in brokenness. In the broken body of Christ on the cross we see God most clearly.

Vulnerable and powerful, fully one of us,
 Both experiencing the pain of living in this world,
 And defeating it by his willingness to suffer and die.
 And in our own brokenness we experienced God most fully.
 God who loves us, embraces us, and welcomes us into this family of faith just as we are.

Never promising that the journey will be easy.
 (Remember: Jesus says, “Pick up your cross and follow me.”)

But always promising that a cross-shaped life,
 Where we are loved by a God who is willing to die for us,
 And called by God to give of ourselves to one another,
 Is the richest, most meaningful, most faithful way to live.



And so in the Lutheran Church we don't just show up on Palm Sunday for a happy parade,
 And then show up again on Easter Sunday for a happy party.
 But we recognize that new life only arises out of suffering and death.

This is the story of Christ, our Messiah.
 This is the story of our own faithfulness.
 This is the story of how God loves us fully, just as we are.
 And leads us through the brokenness of life to the love and grace that we know in Christ.



So we gather **today**, not just to celebrate with the crowd that welcomed him into Jerusalem for the last time.
 But also to remember his suffering and death.
 And his willingness to do whatever is necessary to put us right with God.
 We'll gather this **Thursday**, to remember his last meal with the disciples, and the way he feeds us still today.
 We'll gather this **Friday**, to honor his suffering and death.
 We'll gather this **Saturday**, for the dramatic transition from Lent to Easter.
 Then, and only then, can our celebration of Easter be what it needs to be: the gift of new life that arises from brokenness
 So join us often this week.
 As we walk with our Lord through the last week of his life,
 And experience the new life he wishes to share with us.



As you leave today, our hosts have a 7-day devotional to guide you through this holy week.
 Take some time at home and prepare yourselves for this coming weekend.

9

Saint Peter
LUTHERAN LITURGY

One Last Comment

While the Theology of the Glory is rampant in a world rife with advertising ("Buy this or vote this way or live in this suburb and your future will be assured."), the Theology of the Cross is a little gem of proclamation that pulls the struts away from those houses built on sand.

[Dr. Ken Sundet Jones; Concordia Theological Seminary]

Passion Sunday | Passion Sunday April 9, 2017 www.SPLC.org

Dr. Ken Sundet Jones, one of our friends from the Missouri Synod, writes:

While the Theology of the Glory is rampant in a world rife with advertising ("Buy this or vote this way, or live in this suburb and your future will be assured."), the Theology of the Cross is a little gem of proclamation that pulls the struts away from those houses built on sand.

10

Saint Peter
LUTHERAN LITURGY

One Last Comment

Those who become theologians of the cross make up what Luther later called the heuflein Christi, the little band of Christians (Sermon at Castle Pleissenberg). Luther's last written words, found on a slip in his pockets at his deathbed, sum it all up, "We are beggars. This is true." A Theology of the Cross stands with empty pockets pointing at Christ who desires to give all he has to us, sinners every one.

[Dr. Ken Sundet Jones; Concordia Theological Seminary]


Passion Sunday | Passion Sunday April 9, 2017 www.SPLC.org

Those who become theologians of the cross make up what Luther later called the heuflein Christi, the little band of Christians (Sermon at Castle Pleissenberg). Luther's last written words, found on a slip in his pockets at his deathbed, sum it all up, "We are beggars. This is true." A Theology of the Cross stands with empty pockets pointing at Christ who desires to give all he has to us, sinners every one.


And so this week we stand with empty pockets pointing at Christ, who is seen most clearly and most powerfully this week as he offers himself to us, invites us into the heart of God, And calls us to join him in reaching out to the world in which we live.

May God bless this week for us, and may we be inspired to live the Christ-life in all we do.

Please stand with us as we sing today's Hymn of the Day.



Saint Peter
CATHOLIC CHURCH



Hymn of the Day

Please stand as we sing together
the Hymn of the Day.

1st Service: *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*
(page #8)

2nd Service: *Wondrous Loss*
(page #7)

Passion Sunday / Passion Sunday April 9, 2017 www.SP.C.org