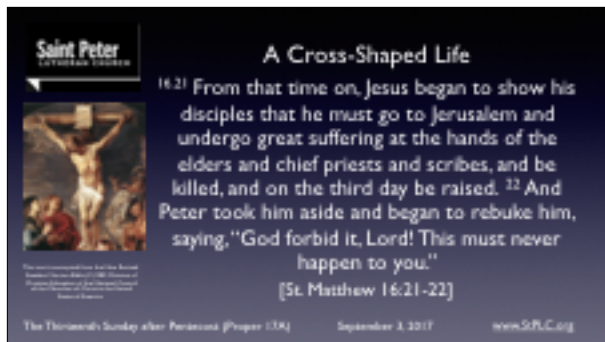
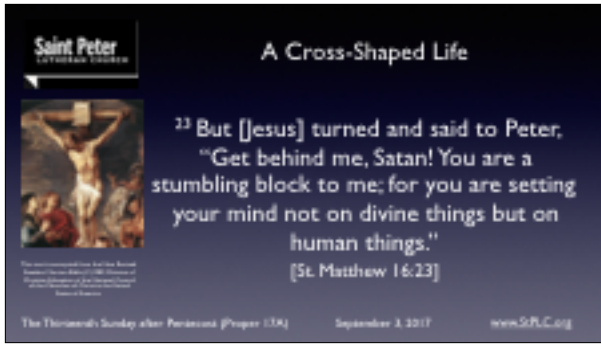


Welcome to worship today, on “Beat Up Saint Peter Sunday.”  
 That’s how today often plays out, you know.  
 Last week Saint Peter was a hero.  
 When the crowds seemed to have no idea what to think about  
 Jesus,  
 And the other disciples seemed to have nothing to say,  
 It is Peter who jumps to his feet and declares:  
 “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”  
 Jesus is equally enthusiastic.  
 “You are the Rock,” he declares to Peter.  
 And he announces that on this rock he will build his church.  
 It is a high point in Peter’s story — it hardly ever gets better than  
 this for Simon Peter.  
 If the Gospels ended here, Peter would likely be remembered as  
 a model of wisdom, certainty and faithfulness.



What a difference a week makes!  
 This morning’s Gospel brings us, as Paul Harvey used to say, the  
 rest of the story.  
 Jesus begins to speak very clearly about his future.  
 It is a story that you and I know well, but one that none of the  
 disciples could ever have imagined.  
 It is a story that includes suffering and humiliation and  
 execution.  
 An unthinkable future for an agent of God.  
 We need to be careful not to make too many assumptions about  
 what his audience was thinking or expecting, but it certainly  
 wasn't this!  
 Peter’s reaction is natural, most likely agreeing with what most  
 people were thinking.  
 A suffering Messiah? God forbid it!

3



Of course Peter couldn't be more wrong.  
And Jesus makes it painfully clear.  
"Get behind me Satan!"

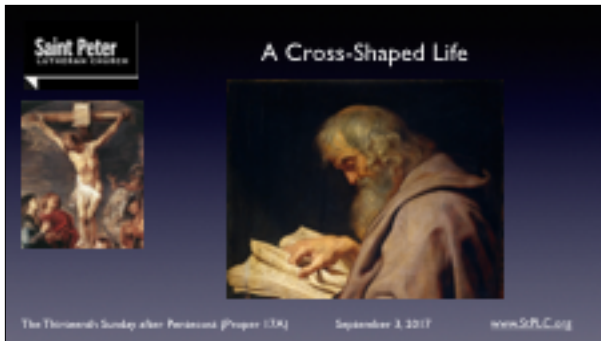
In a resounding rejection of Peter's resistance,  
Jesus rebukes the rebuker.

Get your mind off of human things,  
And back on divine things.

So today becomes "Beat Up Saint Peter Sunday."

At worst: it is a day to shake our heads at how wrong he was.  
At best: it is a day to give thanks that God can work through a character as flawed as Peter is — and, by extension, that God can work through flawed characters like you and me.

4



We tend to beat up Peter for getting this so wrong.  
But can you blame him?

The turn Jesus' story takes is completely unexpected.

Think about how this all began.

A traveling rabbi comes upon a group of unassuming fishermen.

"Join me," he says, "And you will fish for people."

That sounds pretty good.

Gathering, blessing, strengthening, helping...

Who wouldn't want to be involved in this?

At the center of a new movement that would bless people.

That would invite them into the presence of God.

Peter, Andrew, James and John sign on, most likely imagining the positive difference they are about to make in people's lives.


5

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN LITURGY

**A Cross-Shaped Life**

**16:21** From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”  
[St. Matthew 16:21-21]

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Then, all of a sudden, Jesus is speaking in such troubling ways.  
I will be handed over.  
I will suffer at the hands of the religious leaders.  
They will put me to death.  
How can this have anything to do with fishing for people, and drawing them into the presence of God?  
When we put ourselves in Peter’s shoes, it becomes a little harder to beat him up for what he says today.  
How could this possibly be what it means to be Messiah?


6

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN LITURGY

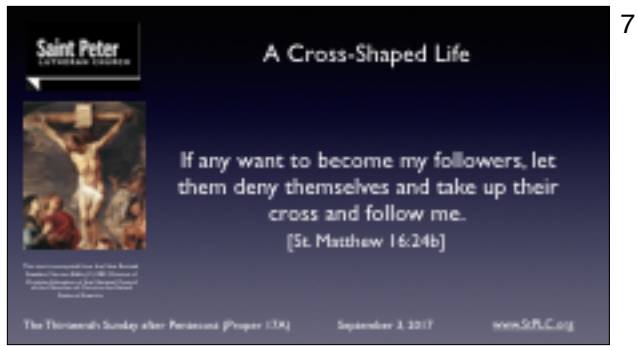
**A Cross-Shaped Life**

**24** If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25** For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. **26** For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?  
[St. Matthew 16:24b-26]

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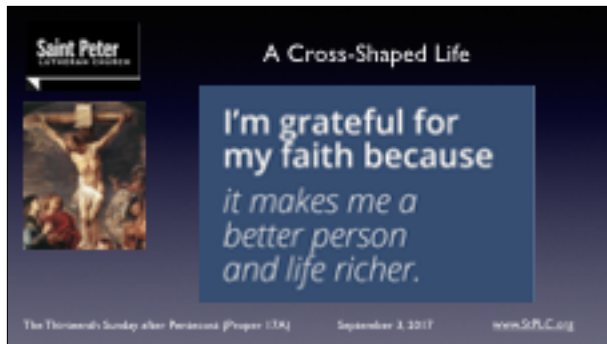
The future into which Jesus walks is dramatically different from the one Peter imagines.  
But that isn’t even the worst of it.  
The future awaiting Peter is every bit as unexpected.  
This text isn’t just about Jesus.  
It is about everyone who will attempt to be his follower.  
What does the life of a Jesus–follower look like?  
This morning’s passage leaves little doubt.  
A Jesus–follower picks up a cross and follows the Lord.  
A Jesus–follower is willing to risk life itself to follow.  
Only in doing so, does a Jesus–follower truly find life.  
Before we scorn Peter for misunderstanding Jesus, we may need to confess that we find ourselves in the same bind.



We too are called to pick up a cross and follow Jesus.  
We too are called to sacrificial living.  
We too are called to stand up for what matters to God,  
Giving no thought to how we might be opposed,  
Or how it might affect our friendships,  
Or how much it costs us.  
Deny yourself.  
Take up your cross.  
Follow me.



This is a particularly hard thing to do in today's world.  
We live in a society which seeks to convince us that we can have it all.  
The constant barrage of media hammers this home to us dozens of times every day.  
As Christians, we work to stay focused on justice and righteousness and faithfulness.  
But when we are surrounded by the self obsessed values of the world, it gets hard to stay true to these ideals.  
Hard for all of us!



And if we're honest about it, there is a temptation to think about our faith in the same way.

It is easy to take a consumer approach to our faithfulness.

What can faith add to my life?

How can it strengthen and deepen my relationship with God?

How can it help me to feel better about myself?

We can approach congregational life in the same manner.

What congregation offers the best opportunities for my family and me?

Where can I find a worship service that matches best with my tastes?

Crudely put, when we live within a ten minute drive of dozens of congregations, which one is the best deal?

Are we starting to sound just a bit like Simon Peter here?

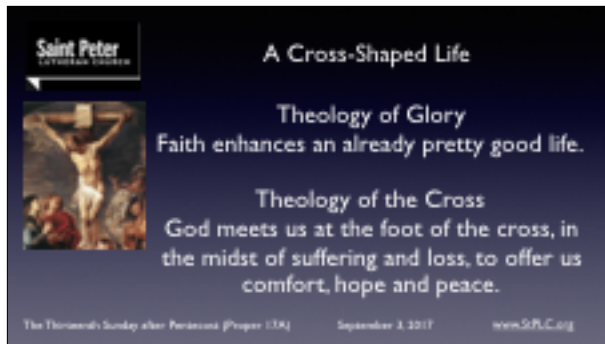


We follow a Lord whose life and ministry culminates in suffering and death.

A Lord who calls us to follow him in giving ourselves to others.

We can't not live in the world, of course.

And so we have to wrestle with these two significant influences in our lives: our faith and our world.



11

Martin Luther distinguished between these two ways of thinking about faith and church life.

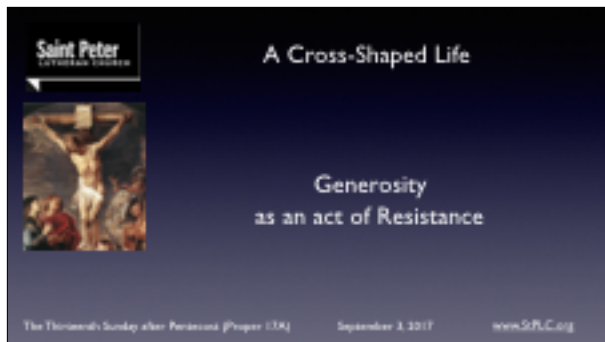
He talked about a theology of glory, where God's desire is to bless us and reward us with a rich and wonderful life.

In this scenario, God ends up looking a lot like us, just more powerful.

He contrasted that with a theology of the cross, where we gather at the foot of the cross in brokenness, and find that God loves us deeply.

Where our willingness to love one another sacrificially becomes a vehicle for God's power and love.

In this scenario, God ends up looking a lot like Jesus, dying on the cross, so that the whole world might come to know God's love.



12

I was at a meeting of Lutheran Pastors this past Tuesday, and one of my colleagues remarked that she and her congregation are beginning to talk about generosity in a new way.

They are talking about generosity as an act of resistance.

Resisting the urge to be interested primarily in ourselves.

Resisting the temptation to have it all our way.

Instead, giving of ourselves in love to others.

Being generous with our time, our energy, our prayers, our money, our hopes and our dreams.

Seeking to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

And praying that by doing so, we too will become vehicles of God's love and grace.

I like this way of thinking about generosity.

It sounds a lot like Jesus.

13

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

**A Cross-Shaped Life**

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.  
[St. Matthew 16:25]

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And here's some good news: along with the call to give of ourselves in this morning's Gospel, there is a promise. We will discover what so many Jesus-followers have found. That in giving of ourselves to others, we experience life as richer, deeper more meaningful than we ever imagined. And so when disaster strikes, we contribute. When people live in countries where health care is almost non-existent, we step up. When a family doesn't have a safe home, we grab a hammer. When someone is hungry, we fill a wagon or volunteer at the food bank. When someone nearby is suffering, we reach out. When others are being mistreated, we stand with them. It is the life Christ calls us to live. Not an easy one; but a rich and meaningful one.

14

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Take It Home!**

Let's keep the conversation going. Our hosts will have a 7-day devotional guide for you as you leave today. Question for this evening's conversation: "How can I follow Jesus in giving myself to others?"


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I'd like to invite you to think about this a bit in the days to come. How is God calling you to be involved in sacrificial living? Who is God seeking to reach through your love and generosity? As you leave today, our hosts have a 7-day devotional for you. Let's spend the next couple of days reflecting on this morning, and preparing ourselves for next Sunday.

15

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Last Word — Henri Nouwen



We become neighbors when we are willing to cross the road for one another. We are all very busy in our own circles. We have our own people to go to and our own affairs to take care of. But if we could cross the road once in a while and pay attention to what is happening on the other side, we might indeed become neighbors."

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Today we will give the last word to Father Henry Nouwen.  
A powerful priest, author, teacher and servant,  
He has been an inspiration to me over the years.

He wrote:

“We become neighbors when we are willing to cross the road for one another. We are all very busy in our own circles. We have our own people to go to and our own affairs to take care of. But if we could cross the road once in a while and pay attention to what is happening on the other side, we might indeed become neighbors.”


Father Nouwen understood that neighbor love is the essence of the life of a servant.

May we come to know that too!

16

**Saint Peter**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Hymn of the Day



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

1<sup>st</sup> Service:  
*O Jesus, I Have Promised*

2<sup>nd</sup> Service: *How Great Thou Art*  
(page #24)

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

- 1) O Jesus, I Have Promised
- 2) How Great Thou Art (page 24)



**Saint Peter**  
LITURGICAL LEADER

**St. Matthew 16:21-28**



16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."


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**Saint Peter**  
LITURGICAL LEADER

**St. Matthew 16:21-28**



24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

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18

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