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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Good Friday
April 15, 2022

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. AMEN.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, it is on this day of the church year...

Yes, of all days on the church calendar, this day, Good Friday, is the day when we focus most specifically on the cross.

Today is the day when we remember the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today, the cross quite literally is front and center.

And I want to do something a bit different than in this Good Friday sermon.

Please bear with me, for indeed I want to talk today about the shape of the cross.

I want to talk about the cross as the intersection of a horizontal line and a vertical line.

I want to talk about the form of the cross, and how there are several messages conveyed by that form.

PAUSE

Now, of course, we know that the cross is the place of our redemption.

It is the place where Jesus dies so that we may be forgiven our sins.

We know this. It is well ingrained in our psyche.

PAUSE

But besides this truth, that the cross is the place of our redemption and the site of our forgiveness, besides this truth, what else does the cross tell us, particularly by its shape?

That is, when we look at the intersection of this horizontal line and vertical line, what does it trigger in our minds theologically.

PAUSE

Now, perhaps we have never spent much time simply gazing at the cross, gazing as it shape.

Perhaps we have never taken some time to look at it in its simplicity.

A horizontal line intersecting vertical line.

Have we ever considered in earnest this symbol of our faith?

I have.

It is kind of an occupational hazard, I suppose.

And overtime, throughout my years of ministry, I have come to see how the cross, a horizontal line intersecting with a vertical line, is truly amazing symbol.

Over my years of ministry I have come to see that in the simple shape of the cross, there is profound meaning in addition to it being the place of our redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

And on this Good Friday, I want to share some of my insights.

In particular, there are four things I hope might come to our minds, when we look at the shape of the cross.

PAUSE

The first is this. That the shape of the cross reminds us of the double nature of Jesus Christ.

The shape of the cross reminds us of the double nature of Jesus Christ—that Jesus is both 100% divine and 100% human.

And this thought actually came to me came to me way back in college.

You see, when I was in college I had a course in the history of modern art.

And in this course I learned about an artist named Piet Mondrian.

And Mondrian, this painter, created several works depicting horizontal and vertical lines.

And Mondrian believed that vertical lines represented the divine, soaring off into heaven.

Vertical lines represented for Mondrian immortality. Vertical lines represented the infinite. They represented the extraordinary.

To the contrary, horizontal lines represented humanity, as stationed on the horizontal ground.

Horizontal lines represented then mortality, the finite, and the ordinary.

For Mondrian, vertical lines represented the divine and divine qualities; and horizontal lines represented humanity and human qualities.

And so at the intersection of a vertical line and a horizontal line...

There at the point of intersection is where we find cross.

There is where we find Jesus, 100% divine and 100% human.

The cross conveys the double nature of Jesus Christ.

That is the first message we see in the shape of the cross.

A second message is this. The cross reminds us that God comes into our world and intersects with our lives.

And this is a message that I will often explain in a funeral sermon.

For we see, the cross bar of the cross is really nothing more than a dash, right?

And so, the cross bar might be understood as the dash containing all the seasons and times of our lives, a.k.a. Ecclesiastes 3, for everything there is a season and time for every matter under heaven.

The cross bar is equivalent to the dash on a grave stone between our date of birth and date of death.

Born on such and such a day, DASH, died on such and such a day.

The dash represents all the moments and events in our life, all the seasons and times of our life.

And so, in a funeral I will regularly explain that God comes into our world in his Son Christ Jesus, and God then intersects with our lives, intersects with our dash, so that we have hope of new life.

The cross, the vertical line of God intersects with the horizontal dash that is our life, and so the cross is an image of our salvation.

God comes into our life, intersects with our life, by his Son Jesus Christ, so that we may believe in him and have eternal life.

That is then the second message we can see in the shape of the cross.

But there is still another message conveyed by the shape of the cross and that is this.

In the cross, God is reconciling all people unto God's self.

In the cross, God is bringing all people into oneness in Jesus Christ.

And here I want us to consider two pieces of scripture.

The first is II Corinthians 5:19, which says, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself."

And to be reconciled means to be brought back in right relationship with.

So, in Christ, God was bringing all people, and the whole world, back into a right relationship with him.

The second passage from scripture is from John 17:22-23, where Jesus is praying to Father.

And in that prayer, Jesus say, "The glory that you have given me, I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them, and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me..."

Jesus prays that all people may be unified.

And, so when we think of these two pieces of scripture, one about the reconciliation of the world to God, and the other about the oneness of all people, we should consider again the shape of the cross.

For it is by the cross that God reconciles all people, and it is by the cross that people are made one in Christ.

And so imagine, if you will, arrows on the ends of the four branches of the cross.

And the arrows point inward, toward the point of intersection, so that we are to imagine that God is drawing all people to himself through Jesus Christ.

God is drawing all people to himself from the north, the south, the east, and west.

God is drawing all people to himself and we are made one in Christ who is at the center of the cross.

Here then is the third message we receive from the shape of the cross, that God draws all people to himself through Christ, and we are made one in his Son.

Finally, the last message I want to share with respect to the shape of the cross is this.

We, who are the people of God, we are called by God to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:19 says as much. Matthew 28:19 is the Great Commission to all believers.

In the Lord's Great Commission, after his resurrection, when the Jesus appeared to his disciples on the mountain...

In the Lord's Great Commission, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you."

We are directed by Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations.

And, with respect to this Great Commission, I remember witnessing a baptism once in which the pastor took some water from the baptismal font and splashed it on the floor in front of the font, and took some water and splashed it behind the font, and took some water and splashed it to the left and to the right of the font.

I have only seen that done once. Of course, the baptistery in this particular church was designed so that this could be done, because ceramic tile had been laid all around the font.

You couldn't do this in a church with carpeting. I mean you could, but it wouldn't go over well with the powers that be.

But that act of splashing around the baptismal font, was meant to be symbolic of the words from Matthew 28:19.

Because what the pastor was doing was splashing water in the four cardinal directions, north, south, east, or west, such as to say that as a baptized person we are called to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the proverbial four corners of the earth.

And so, if we again consider the shape of the cross, we might see it as a sort of compass, where the four branches of the cross represent the directions, north, south, east, and west.

And instead of putting arrows on the ends of the four branches so as to face inward, we might now put arrows on the ends of the branches to face outward.

The cross reminds us then we are called to go make disciples of all nations, to the four corners of the world.

PAUSE

These then are four messages conveyed by the shape of the cross.

- 1) Jesus is 100% divine and 100% human.
- 2) In Jesus Christ, God intersects with the seasons and times of our lives, so that we have the hope of salvation.
- 3) In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world unto God's self by the power of the cross and making God's people one in Christ.
- 4) And, finally, as people of God, we are called to go out in all directions to make disciples of all nations.

There may be other messages you see in the shape of the cross.

If so, I would be curious to hear them.

But again, I share these with you on this Good Friday, because the cross is front and center today.

I share them with you because God has given us a powerful but simple symbol of our faith.

A vertical line intersecting with a horizontal line.

It doesn't get much more simple than that.

But by that simple symbol, God redeemed the whole world.

On the cross God destroyed the power of sin and death.

On the cross God's very love for the world was on display for all to see.

Thanks be to God. Amen.