



**“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” 1 Cor. 1:18.**

September 14 is “Holy Cross Day” in the church year. The cross on which Jesus sacrificed His life for the sins of the world was thought to have been discovered in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was constructed on the sight where the cross had been found and dedicated on September 13, 335AD, but the cross was not revealed to the public until the next day. Since then, September 14 has been celebrated as “Holy Cross Day” in the church year.

We celebrate “Holy Cross Day” in the church year today because the cross is the symbol of what Christ has done for His church. We in the Lutheran Church today are not celebrating a “relic” of the past but instead, celebrate and proclaim the great triumphant victory of our Lord on the actual cross (whether the original cross exists today or not) that once stood on Calvary. On that cross (the actual cross of Christ) the love of God the Father who sends His Son from the virgin Mary is poured out in the blood of Christ. His blood is shed for the sins of the world. His life is sacrificed and He dies that God’s wrath and anger at us for our sin would be satisfied and we would be forgiven receiving by God’s grace life and salvation through Christ and Christ alone. The death of Jesus was the defeat of death for us. His Divine love is given and we receive God’s grace and mercy.

What we celebrate on “Holy Cross Day” is the fact that God gives His own Son and that the work of salvation by Jesus, for us, is accomplished on the cross. From the cross Jesus says, “Father, forgive them...” From the cross, Jesus states clearly, “It is finished.” The work of redemption/salvation is accomplished by what Jesus does in His life death and resurrection.

Whether the original cross of Christ was discovered in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century or not is of little importance to us today because the Scriptures give to us what Christ has done for us on the cross, that we are given forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the “cross” through His hands and His feet and lifted up as the Scriptures foretold and through this remarkable and astonishing work of Divine love, He still draws people to Himself through the redemption, that is in His blood. We receive forgiveness by the riches of God’s grace in Christ. This is better than any relic anywhere because we have the real crucified and risen Christ in His Word and in His Sacraments.

When we look at the cross, whether it is the crucifix on the altar or the processional cross or any other depiction of the cross of Christ we use in The Divine Service as we receive God’s gifts given to us through Word and Sacrament, we are reminded of God’s grace and mercy toward us giving us forgiveness and making us His own children. Rather than a relic from the past, our use of the crosses in the church are illustrative reminders of the extent of God’s love for us in Christ. For the “cross” is the place of God’s forgiveness; of God’s intervention in human history; of God’s rescue of people lost in sin; of God’s promise of a Savior delivered which gives eternal salvation to all who believe. When we see the cross or any cross depicted anywhere, we are immediately reminded of the work of salvation completed by Christ our Savior so that we are made free from the punishment of sin we deserve. Instead, we are given the full extent of God’s love in Christ that our physical death would not be an eternal death, but only the gate to everlasting life.

Look to the cross and see the death of Jesus for you. Look to the cross and see God’s promises kept. Look to the cross and see the grace of God given through the blood shed by Jesus and His death given for our atonement. Look to the cross, for it points to the empty tomb giving to us the victory of Jesus over sin, death and the devil forever. Reminded of God’s great love and mercy for us in Christ whenever we see the cross, we can sing with the hymn writer:

*Faithful cross, true sign of triumph,  
Be for all the noblest tree;  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thine equal be;  
Symbol of the world’s redemption,  
For the weight that hung on thee!*

(LSB 454:4) “Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle”

God’s blessings to all of you!

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt