

Sermon Outline

THE CROSS OF SORROW WOULD BE A CROSS OF GLORY TOO.

- I. This is revealed by God's Word, contrary to reason.
- II. This is because the cross glorifies Christ and his purpose of atoning for our sins.
- III. This is seen and heard by faith through preaching.

Sermon

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted

up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. (Jn 12:20–33)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to Saint John the twelfth chapter verses twenty through thirty-three.

Boys and girls I pray that you are doing well today. Do you know what I have here. I have a cross and a palm branch. Today we celebrate Palm Sunday when Jesus rides into Jerusalem and is hailed as a king. He comes to save the people yet not in a way that they expect. They expect an earthly king, yet Jesus is not merely an earthly king. He saves the people, how? By the wood of the cross. In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks about his upcoming death on the cross. After seeing Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, I better understand why Jesus says this in John 12: “Now is my soul troubled” (v 27). Jesus was speaking about his death, even indicating what kind of death he would die. Jesus knew he would go to a cross, and this cross would be graphic, disturbing, soul-wrenching.

Yet what does Jesus say about his cross? He says the most surprising thing:

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Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (v 23). The hour had come for Jesus to be glorified by his cross! How does that happen? How does the cross lead to Jesus’ glorification? Ponder those

questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

I.

The cross doesn't seem as though it could glorify anything other than violence, does it? Jesus' cross didn't seem glorious at all, at least not in the way people normally think of glory. Don't you think that if something is truly glorious, it's pleasant? For example, a glorious day is not too hot or too cold; it's sunny; the humidity isn't too thick; maybe there's a breeze. A glorious meal tastes great, has everything you like, and enough for you to enjoy. But Jesus didn't go to a cross that seemed glorious, like the sparkling crosses on jewelry or decorations. He went to a cross of rough wood, to die the most cruel form of death known to man. His cross did not seem glorious at all.

Do not trust your reason, dear Christian. Your reason wants to redefine what God's Word calls "glorious." Your reason wants to find glory in pleasant things that you experience, in what pleases your senses, in what makes you lord and master of your life. But this is a false glory and man-centered. It looks good now, but it won't save you. If you chase glory in this life, you won't find it in the next. Jesus says, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (v 25). The same applies to glory too. Anyone who loves earthly glory in this life will lose it all, and whoever hates earthly glory for Christ's sake will have eternal glory.

So you must bow your reason to God's Word. God's Word alone should shape how you see glory, what you believe, and how you worship. God's Word alone is right. Sinful human reason will deceive you. God's inspired

Word never does. That's why Lutheran churches are supposed to be *sola Scriptura* churches. *Sola Scriptura* means "by Scripture alone." True Lutheran theology and worship is not based on Scripture plus what sounds right to you, or Scripture plus emotion—but on Scripture alone. Scripture is misread if you use it to prove what you already think instead of conforming what you think to Scripture.

This is clear concerning the cross. Though it disagrees with sinful human reason, God's Word says Jesus' cross was glorious. The cross, the nails, the wounds, the beatings, the death—glorious! But how? Jesus' cross was glorious because he paid for the world's sins, including yours, on it. Your redemption is paid for by Jesus' blood, shed for you. Your spot in the grave has been made temporary. Your sins are covered by Jesus' righteousness, earned for you at the cross. Sin's darkness is over. The Gospel shines bright. Hell's hostages are released. Heaven is open. "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out" (v 31). When you understand that all this was a result of Jesus' cross, you must admit that the cross was truly glorious, even if its glory was hidden to reason!

II.

The cross also glorifies the Son of Man, as well as his divine purpose. At the cross, Jesus' one-man mission of saving sinners is finished. He who was crowned with thorns has now taken his rightful crown as King of kings. Even now, Jesus still bears the marks of the nails in his hands, as a way to show that his mission is complete! Sins are atoned for, once and for all. Now Christ and him crucified is preached. Now the blessings of the cross pour out on the Church through the preaching of the Gospel and the

Sacraments. Because of the cross, Christ is glorified forever as the crucified Savior.

See it this way: One day, a king went out among his people dressed like a beggar. The king looked poor, dirty, and offensive. And he was treated like a poor, dirty beggar. By their reason and senses, the people saw just the shabby clothes and dirty appearance. They didn't recognize the king hidden under them. Yet this man was still king. His shabby clothes didn't reflect who he really was. He still had royal glory, even though it was hidden. And if someone recognized the king in this outfit, they'd give him honor and glory, for they'd see who he truly was.

To man's reason and senses, Jesus at the cross looked poor, dirty, offensive, like a criminal and a victim. But the eyes of faith see Jesus and his cross for what both truly are. Jesus is God's Son, our Savior, who died for your sins. And the cross, which doesn't look glorious, is God's glorious way of atoning for your sins! The cross has God's hidden glory. His Word says it, and that means it is truly glorious. It is glorious to faith, which trusts God's Word.

III.

Only faith sees the cross for the divine rescue mission it really is. Unbelief can't see this. This distinction explains a really strange part of our text. Jesus said,

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” (vv 27–28)

Now what happened after this? What did the people think who heard this? John says:

The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.” (vv 29–30)

Here you see the difference between unbelief and faith. To those people in John’s Gospel who heard God’s Word but did not believe, it sounded like thunder. That is, God’s Word sounded unclear to them, ominous, earthly. When God spoke about the glory of Jesus’ cross, the unfaithful could not understand it. They were used to listening to their reason and senses, so they could not rightly hear God’s Word. So God’s Word is also heard today by all who do not have ears to hear. God’s Word sounds unclear to them, for they are used to listening to their reason and senses. God’s Word sounds ominous, since it overturns what their reason and senses say. And to those who do not have ears to hear, God’s Word seems like other earthly religious books, just myths and fairy tales.

On the other hand, there were those present who had faith to hear. To the people who heard with faith in John’s Gospel, God’s Word sounded like the sweet voice of an angel from heaven. When God spoke about how he would glorify Jesus at the cross, this Word was not ominous at all, but wonderfully sweet. This preaching from God was heavenly, not earthly, just as the preaching of the Gospel today is heard by the ears of faith as a heavenly preaching and not an earthly preaching.

Today, God's Word still speaks of Christ crucified and the glorious cross where he bought your forgiveness. How do the faithful today receive this Word and its preaching? In the very the same way! Today's faithful receive the Gospel preaching as a sweet, angelic Word from heaven. It's clear, sweet, heavenly. Man's reason and senses can't compare to that.

In conclusion, crosses did not look glorious. They were violent, graphic, disturbing, as Mel Gibson's movie showed. But today's Gospel for Holy Cross Day teaches that Jesus' cross was God's glorious way of atoning for sins. The eyes of faith see God's hidden glory at the cross, which sinful human reason and senses can't see. God be praised that Christ and him crucified is still preached, and that faithful hearts receive this preaching as a clear, sweet, comforting voice from heaven. Amen.