**Matthew 16:21-28**

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from 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, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” **23** But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” **24** Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. **25** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. **26** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? **27**  For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. **28** Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

**“Cross Filled Words That Save”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:3-5). There is a place in Lithuania called, “The hill of crosses.” It took shape in the early 1800’s when this country became part of the Russian Empire. Rebellion followed and it led people to put up crosses in memory of lives lost. Over the years, more would bring crosses because of various other ordeals. So potent a witness, during Soviet occupation times they went out of the way to ban the site and even bulldozed it down three times.[[1]](#footnote-1) After the darkness passed, this hill remains with crosses in all shapes and sizes numbering over 100,000.

For the longest time in our western world, the cross has had a place. It is one of those enduring symbols not easily forgotten about over the generations. Unfortunately, we see the enduring link between cross and suffering dwindling away. It has become a cheap trinket worn by pop stars, an offense some want the courts to remove from the public square, and yet too depressing to have in churches that seek to have no negative picture. Even families are removing the cross for more popular decorations to put up in the home. Yet, as great as the confession was by Peter last week saying, “You are the Christ the Son of the living God.” So today, we see from our Gospel reading how Words confessed lead to actions that come together in Christ. God calls us to life by way of the cross and it is glorious.

1. **This call of life gloriously comes only from Jesus.**
2. He shares His cross as the cure for a dying and broken world.

* It is what none expects to be salvation.
* It is far outside of what looks good.
* It is beyond the means of money or power.
* It is least of all safe and secure.
* How is it in anyway a cure? “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” “Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?”

1. Salvation is something completely different for life when it comes from Jesus.

* What He holds out by His death is an act of genuine love for all time. (Standard)
* What He says is not short-term relief, but a long-term answer to defeat sin, death, and the Devil. (greatest miracle)
* What He sees in the cross will turn the world upside for good and not evil. (sign of the cross)
* What He gives as a pure gift we desperately need above all other needs. As our Lutheran Fathers state, “For without faith and without Christ human nature and human strength are much too weak to do good works, call upon God, have patients in suffering, (even) love one’s neighbor…” (Tappert 46:36-37)

1. **This call of life gloriously stands against all other offers.**
2. Talk about your highs and lows.

* Jesus had just praised Peter for his good confession saying, “Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”
* Peter knew the OT scriptures about the suffering Messiah, but still took Him aside to have a word. Jesus wasted no time to point out, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”
* Peter was not suffering from sickness, lack of food, or doing something illegal. Instead, the refusal was to suffer Jesus’ death to be any good for his life or that of anyone else.
* If the Devil could not tempt God’s Son in the wilderness to give up on the cross, he changed his tactics to use His beloved disciples.

1. Ask yourself, “What ways do you drag Christ off to the side and deny Him?”

* Is to think lightly of the warnings scattered throughout the New Testament? They echo Christ for St. Paul says, “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.” (Phil 3:18-19).
* Is it to reject the real problem in this world? Christ said not just to Peter but all those present, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”
* The more we want to lead our life, take it in our own way, or make it as we see fit. What room will there be to listen to the love of what God truly says is life for sinners?
* When we entered church, it was not worshiping our love but repentant hearts and minds were saying, “O Lord open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.”

1. **This call of life gloriously prevails over all the crosses to carry.**
2. Once again, Jesus saved His disciple from Satan by preaching the Word in truth and purity.

* The harsh Law of calling Peter “Satan” drove out the darkness to hear the light of love. “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”
* Losing at the cross, showed three days later who went before His disciples.
* Jesus made the exchange by His sacrifice to have a cross-filed life in His Name.
* St. Paul reveals how Christ’s Church serves a world that will never admit to suffering such loss to win, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (“The” good, thief on the cross)

1. Jesus redefines life for us by His great sacrifice that saves.

* There are more martyrs today than all the history added up from the time of Christ. (Not martyrdom over a cause or political strife)
* The less shocking ways of the cross are no less glorious in this church. (Acts of love for the saints, mercy to show in a sinful world, one S.S. class taught at a time, and forgiveness given day by day.)
* Followers of Christ lose life, but it is to gain a more hope-filled life that lasts. Luther tells us, “For God is a Master who can cause what would hinder and harm us, to further and profit us; what would kill us, to serve to bring us to life; what would move us to sin and condemn us, to strengthen our faith and hope and to cause our prayer to be all the more effective and all the more richly answered” (Plass 361:1063).
* Words and action go together; they belong to Christ who promises your salvation is unshaken for He goes before us all.

The hill of crosses in Lithuania is a sight easily seen via internet search. Yet, nothing is greater than what God has hidden of His cross in the lives of His people throughout this world. It stands fast by the Word and sacraments where the love of Christ casts out the Devil’s way. God calls us to life by way of the cross and it is glorious. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill\_of\_Crosses [↑](#footnote-ref-1)