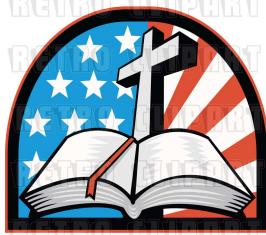


**July/
August
2015**



HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Words from the Cross

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"Take heart, ... your sins are forgiven."

Matthew 9:2

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the Kingdom established by Christ, the focus is the forgiveness of sins while every other worldly religion focuses on how to live a righteous or virtuous life. In order for people to have this forgiveness, the Second Person of the Triune God became a man and died on a cross. This was the purpose of His work on earth: Christ's life, suffering, and death won for all people the forgiveness of their sins. His works of miracles and healing had no other purpose than to bring people to believe in the forgiveness of their sins He earned for them on the cross.

The holy office of preaching the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name was instituted to be among all people in all ages until the end of time. The sins of anyone who believes this preaching, from his heart, are forgiven, as God's Word proclaims. According to His Gospel, God demands no work or suffering on our part by which we must blot out our own sins or earn remission from them ourselves. God alone must receive the glory for the rescue and salvation of our souls. God gives us everything for nothing, without any merit or worthiness on our part, out of His pure grace and mercy alone.

Christ knows how difficult it is for us, when we recognize how great our sins are, to believe firmly that despite our transgressions we are children of God and received into His kingdom of grace. For that reason, He added Holy Baptism to His Word, as a seal to a letter. He commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). He bound and adorned this command with the promise that "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Baptism is thus the visible pledge that Christ intends for each person to share in the forgiveness He has won for him.

That our faith might also have a regular reminder of Christ's forgiveness, He instituted His Holy Supper. This Sacrament provides additional support for our faith so it can remain firm against the ongoing onslaught of the devil, the world, and our wavering, sin-weakened flesh. Whoever goes to Holy Communion can say, "How can I doubt, asking if I have a share in Christ's atonement for the world and if my sins are forgiven me? Christ has given me a share in His body, which He presented to God on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and He has given me to drink of the blood that flowed on Golgotha for the forgiveness of all sin. What more could Christ do to convince me that I belong to those who have been pardoned by Him?"

Finally, Jesus has given His Church the power to say to every individual sinner in His name, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). Christ has promised that such an absolution, bestowed in His name on earth, will be valid before Him in heaven. Beloved, by the working of the Holy Spirit through these blessed means of grace, what can we do but continue to believe, rejoice, and share in the fact that we are forgiven and loved! God bless you richly through His Holy Word and Sacraments as you worship Him this summer.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Skelton