**Summer sermon series: The Apostles’ Creed – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Isaiah 53:10-12 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“The Cross Must Come Before the Glory”**

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

“The New Colossus” a poem written by Emma Lazarus in the early 1900s are words which are graven on a tablet attached to the pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty stands. Lady Liberty promises freedom to all who pass by her through New York Harbor, to “the land of the free.”

Emma Lazarus’ poem echoes words our Lord spoke in his Sermon on the Mount. There he promises us true freedom, **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”** (Matthew 11:28) Do you hear Jesus’ invitation? Is he calling to you because you are weary and burdened this morning? Jesus can sympathize. Last Sunday Isaiah showed us the suffering Savior. The prophet continues that theme this morning. This morning Isaiah again leads us to the foot of the cross on that rugged hill outside of city gates of Jerusalem and there we see Jesus, suspended between earth and heaven, bloodied and suffering, not only in his body but also in his soul. Vs10 Isaiah says, “**It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer**.”

Do we often think of God’s will as something he wants to do that inflicts suffering? Did God actually wish for his Son to bear the cross of suffering and death? Yes! Before the creation of the world, God the Father knew that he would need to send his Son to save us from us from death and eternal suffering. So he planned to send his Son for us, **“It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer.”** (vs10)

“What about me then? Because I still suffer… is that Gods’ will, that I too must bear the cross?” How many here today cannot understand why God would let you suffer loss – loss of loved ones to death, of a marriage to divorce, of investments to a poor economy? Who here today writhes in pain because a thorn in the flesh does not go away, and you wonder why the Great Physician doesn’t use his healing powers? Who here today groans under the pain of searing temptations that just will not go away, and you cannot understand why God permits those temptations to come and come again? Who today feels the cross of anguish bearing down on your soul because you feel all alone in the world? Who today knows that no one understands what you are going through, and probably no one would care even if they did understand? Who today is frustrated with the way they have been living and feel they are a failure – as judged by God’s standard?

Yes, the cross comes to us, too! The cross we bear is to set aside my will, my wants… and to surrender willingly to God’s will. His will is that my sufferings are for my good, that he will actually bless me because of them! But, with loss I am tempted to believe that he doesn’t care for me, that somehow he has abandoned me. With these sufferings He brings me to the brink of despair so that I cry out, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”

And that’s exactly where he wants me. For if God were to always give me what I want, good health, healthy relationships, healthy bank accounts, to never suffer any kind of loss, then God knows I would see no need for my Savior. Then he knows I would see myself as my own Statue of Liberty, providing my own rest and peace and security in life. Then I have learned nothing in life.

When my Father in heaven through sufferings and loss leads me to recognize my own utter impotence as a sinful human being, then I realize that my total and absolute dependence is on Christ and his cross, and not on me. Then I have learned something. That I need those sufferings and hardships and losses, so that I am forced to run back to him and totally and completely depend on him. Then I realize that everything that is lacking in my life is supplied by my Father in heaven – and it begins with the cross.

So, too, for Jesus, it began with the cross. Last Sunday Isaiah used the picture of a sacrifice, the lamb on the Day of Atonement. Today he again uses the picture of sacrifice but from a different perspective. In vs10 Isaiah writes that “**the LORD… makes his life a guilt offering**.”

In the Old Testament (Leviticus 5:15ff) the LORD through Moses commanded the Jews to bring a guilt offering to the temple if a man sinned against “**any of the LORD’s holy things**.” For example: in the Old Testament God required his people to bring a tenth of their income as their offering. Let’s say that on one Sabbath an Israelite came for worship but because of his selfishness or poor stewardship brings a less than acceptable offering to the LORD. His failure to abide by the LORD’s rules of worship would require a guilt offering. Only a ram could be offered as a guilt offering – an expensive animal. In addition the priest would determine the cost of whatever it was the worshiper failed to do and the worshiper had to add 20% to that and give it to the priest as his guilt offering. The guilt offering made compensation for something that was lacking.

Do you see the connection? What is it that you and I have failed to do? We have withheld from God our full, explicit trust in him. We have held on to our will and forgotten about God’s will. We have complained about our crosses. We have not always thanked God for sending us the cross. Something is lacking. An offering must be made. Restitution must be paid. God demands our very lifeblood. We must die. We must suffer here and in eternity. What could we bring to satisfy that payment? Nothing.

We see how great our Father’s love is for us in the cross! “**The LORD… makes his life a guilt offering**.” “**It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer,**” yes, instead of us! It was the LORD’s will, Isaiah says, that he “**pour out his life unto death.”** The blood of the ram, Jesus’ lifeblood, holy, precious, innocent of all sin, is poured out as the offering to the LORD to make full restitution.

Can you imagine not ever having to pay on your mortgage again, or your vehicle loans, or your college loans, or your credit cards? Can you imagine someone paying for all of your debt and saying, “Here you go! No worries, all is paid for. No need to pay me back!” That would be incredible! How much more so that Christ made full compensation for our sins. He provided everything that was lacking – a full life of trust in his Father’s promises, a full life of obedience and willing submission to God’s will, a complete payment for the guilt of sin, and he says, “Here you go! No worries, all is paid for. No need to pay me back!”

We can be confident that the bank accepted this payment. Isaiah writes, “**After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied**.” Because Jesus’ life and death were enough to pay for our debt, God was satisfied and allowed Jesus to “**see the light of life**.” Yes, 700 years before it happened, Isaiah was allowed to stand and gaze with awe into the empty tomb. Christ’s resurrection was proof that God accepted Jesus’ compensation on our behalf. Yes, the cross must come first, but then comes the glory – for Christ and for us.

When our Soldiers returned from the Vietnam War… what was their reward, their compensation for the price their bodies and minds and souls paid for our country? In my estimation there was none. When our Soldiers return from war today, what is their reward? A hero’s welcome, support from their community, memorial parks and awards and parties… but one might question, “Is it enough for their sacrifice?” What about for Jesus? What is his reward for the pain of the cross? Yes, his resurrection to be sure! But Isaiah hints that there’s something more…

Isaiah writes in vs12, “**Therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death**.” The Hebrew words translated as “strong” and “great” can also mean “numerous” or “many”. Jesus’ rewards are the many souls to whom he will have the privilege of saying, “You are mine.” How refreshing this must be for Jesus! His cross was not in vain! Christ’s joy is that by the suffering and pain of the cross he is able to announce salvation to you and to me! We are his glory! The fact that by his cross he is able to take weak sinners, indebted to God, lacking everything, who deserved to be crushed for all eternity and to make their accounts “paid-in-full,” to make them his people, his children, to give them the resurrection from the dead, and to give them eternal life – this is Christ’s reward. You are his reward!

Because you are his treasured possession, he doesn’t want to lose you. That is why we must continue to bear the cross. When I suffer, when I experience loss, when I feel anguish in my soul because of temptation, when I am one of the weary and burdened, then I must go to Christ’s cross and see that my greatest debt has been paid. Then I must go to the glory of Christ’s empty tomb and see that my greatest fear has been taken away. There in his cross and his empty tomb I realize that my total and absolute and constant dependence must be on God, for help in every need, for comfort in every grief, for strength in every pain and suffering. He promises all of that through his Son Jesus.

Lady Liberty may be a symbol of hope to the outcasts and downtrodden of the world. She may stand tall as a beacon of peace and freedom to those who pass by her gates. But in the end, that statue will fall and with her all of her promises of freedom and peace. But our King will stand on the earth. He will wear his crown of glory. He will welcome us through the gates of heaven. And He will say to you, “Set down your cross,” and he will bring us to glory everlasting. “Come, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you eternal rest.” Amen.