

Galatians 6:14-17

“Boasting”

Pastor Bill Seaman, Hope Lutheran Church

March 15, 2017

The text for this evening is Galatians 6:14-17 May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule--peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

A doctor, an engineer, and a politician were arguing as to which profession was older. "Well," argued the doctor, "without a physician mankind could not have survived, so I am sure that mine is the oldest profession." "No," said the engineer, "before life began there was complete chaos, and it took an engineer to create some semblance of order from this chaos. So engineering is older." "But," chirped the triumphant politician, "who created the chaos?"

What do you boast about? We may not think that we are boasters, but we recognize that trait in others. We may not think that we boast, but we all have personal pride. We take pride in our accomplishments, in how we care for our bodies, in our children, our homes, our possessions and many other things. Our pride in those things that we do or for which we are responsible is a form of boasting, even though we may not be braggarts.

Paul discovered the antidote for boasting. His prayer was that he would never boast in anything other than the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why does he say this and how can this be an antidote for boasting?

In this sermon series we are going to be looking at different passages in the New Testament that focus on the cross of Jesus. There are some things that we are going to be hearing repeatedly – things that we need to hear repeated; that we must never forget. We know the reason for the cross. We are sinners – that is we have rebelled against God; broken His just laws, and in general failed to be the people He has created us to be. That sin separates us from God. He is a holy God and not only does this mean He is without sin and demands us to be perfect, but his holiness would consume us were we to attempt to enter into His presence. Our sin creates barriers between us and others – even our families and closest friends. Our personal desires prevent us from loving fully and trusting others completely. We often have negative thoughts toward others and speak thoughtless words that hurt others even sometimes without

intending to do so. Our sinful natures and actions impact our personal well-being which has repercussions in our physical, emotional and mental health.

It was our sin that made the cross necessary. Because no matter how hard we try, we continue to suffer from the consequences of our sin and we also continue to sin, despite our best efforts. Our sins continue to impact our relations with others and there is nothing we can do to effect reconciliation with a just, righteous and holy God. The only cure for sin is for God to fix the problem. It was necessary for Him, as a righteous God, to have the punishment for our sin paid. Jesus paid the price – took the punishment for our sin on Himself. He did this by being forsaken by His Father when He died on the cross. The cross thus becomes the means by which our sin is removed by Jesus taking the punishment upon Himself. It is His death on the cross that gives to us the victory and restores our relationship with God. It enables us to have loving relations with others. It is the means by which we know our true value – we are loved by God so much that He died for us to give us eternal life with Him.

This is the basic theology of the cross. However, Paul goes beyond the theology of the cross and gives us some practical thoughts about what this means for him (and therefore for us as well). Through the cross the world has been crucified to him. Jesus left His heavenly home and during His earthly ministry He said that the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. Paul also left his family and home and become an itinerant preacher, having no permanent home. We do not read anywhere of Jesus having an occupation to earn a living. Apparently He was dependent on others to provide for his needs. While Paul was a tentmaker and did ply that trade from time to time, he also was dependent on others to meet his needs. He notes that the Philippians often sent funds to support him. Jesus was rejected, betrayed, tortured and was crucified. Paul also recounts the many privations he endured – imprisonments, shipwreck and others. So, the things of this world were of little importance to Paul. He gave them up for the sake of preaching the cross of Jesus.

Paul was crucified to the world. He found his identity in Jesus. He tells us in Romans that we are buried with Christ by baptism into death. He also sees baptism as being raised with Jesus into a new life. Because of his identity with Jesus the world meant nothing to him. He even says that it makes no difference to him whether he lives or dies; in fact he would be hard pressed if he had to make that decision, though he would probably choose to live for the sake of serving those to whom God had called him.

Because of this, Paul says that he will not boast of anything other than the cross of Christ. Neither circumcision or uncircumcision is of any importance. It does not matter whether you are Jew or Gentile. Your brand of theology is of no consequence. Neither his education or status is of any value. The important thing is that he is a new creation – he has a new identity in Jesus.

For us, we need to think about our boasting – those things in which we take pride and which we consider so important. Can those things that we hold dear save us? Can they even provide

much help when we face serious challenges in this life – loss of job, fatal disease, and death of a close loved one, loss of a home to a natural disaster, you name the tragedy.

The cross is the antidote for us also. The cross is an antidote for materialism when we focus more on things than on our relation with God. The cross is an antidote for consumerism when we “need” to continue to buy and accumulate things; whether they be books, electronics, the new car, home furnishings, etc. The cross is an antidote for entitlement mentality. How many times have we not felt that we were entitled to a “fair deal” or felt cheated because we did not get what someone else had or we resented others’ good fortune? The cross is an antidote for our need for instant gratification. We need relief from pain immediately. We need TV programs to have resolution in thirty minutes or less. We need to have our meals on time. The cross is an antidote for pride in our abilities and accomplishments. God gives to us our being, our health, such as it is, our strength, our mental powers, our abilities. These are gifts from Him. The cross reminds us of all our self-indulgence that cost Jesus His suffering and death and the cross reminds us of what is truly of value and meaning. The cross points beyond the passing things of this life to the eternity that lies beyond – to life with Jesus who loved us, lived for us and died that we might be with Him for time and for eternity.

We also will boast in the cross of Jesus. By the cross of Jesus we are forgiven; we are redeemed; we are saved. In the cross of Jesus we have meaning and purpose in our life. Through the cross of Jesus we have a future. The cross of Jesus gives us our identity. May we never boast, but in the cross of Jesus.