

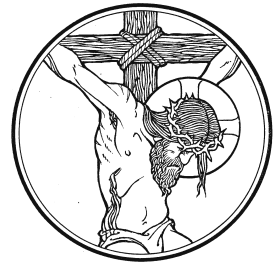
March 2022

Symbols in the church teach. That is their purpose. Just as you hang pictures on your wall at home to teach your children about grandpa and grandma and the years of handwork they endured and the sacrificial love they gave for their family, so also the church is adorned to teach you things of Christ. There are symbols and images. Do you notice them? Have you ever wondered what some of them mean? Many are obvious but others may have you asking questions. Come to Bible Study and ask. If you're wondering, so are other people.

Most significantly the cross is prominent and rightfully so. This is good for reasons I feel I don't even have to state. Yet Scripture really knows nothing of empty crosses. You are called to take up and bear your cross which is the Christian life. Whoever would follow Jesus must daily deal with attacks on our Lord's teaching and word, be ridiculed and shamed for bearing His name and not conforming to the world. And this cross full of trial and tribulation is a blessing. For within it Christ is proclaimed and we are turned away from seeking earthly glory and fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

But the highest and best cross is the one upon which Christ hangs. Open your eyes and look - we are in Lent. Repentance recognizes the sin which put Christ on the cross is mine and at the same time sees Christ on the cross as the most wonderful mystery. When the poisonous serpents bit the children of Israel in the desert, God commanded Moses to provide a remedy; the bronze serpent on a pole. Everyone who looked at it would live. So it is with the cross of Christ. To see Christ hanging there is to look upon our sin. He had to die as a payment for our poisonous hearts, things done and left undone. Lest we think of our sins too lightly, gaze upon the Savior nailed to the tree.

But there He is, the Savior, in the very act of saving. A truly beautiful spectacle to behold. Some may have trouble gazing upon it because yes, the body on the cross makes it all very real. My sin is real, but also very real is my saving in this glorious mystery of love. As Jesus is lifted up He draws all men to Himself. And there is glory here. The glory of God in His love in sending the Son for you. Only the lowliest of criminals were crucified, in what was a public spectacle of humiliation. But that makes us love it all the more. The greatest of all took the lowest spot and we have simply songs of thankfulness and praise.



To gaze upon that cross is to see God's love most clearly. The love of Christ who willingly offers Himself up as a sacrifice for those who have rejected Him. The love of God the Father, who offers up his Son. The Holy Spirit who takes the blood that flows from our Lord's side, the blood that comes from the place where the spear has pierced his skin, filling up our chalice, and becoming the life giving baptismal water.

As the picture of grandpa and grandma teaches, so does the image of Christ on the cross and wonderfully so. To that end, an addition of a crucifix will be made to our processional cross at the beginning of Lent. To gaze upon it is to be taught the faith, reminded of the Savior's act of saving, and be secured in the fact that you are ransomed in this mysterious payment and loved through this greatest act of self-sacrifice.

(OVER)

*Upon the cross extended
See, world, your Lord suspended.
Your Savior yields his breath.
The Prince of Life from heaven
Himself has freely given
to shame and blows and bitter death.*

*Your cross I place before me;
Its saving power restore me,
Sustain me in the test.
It will, when life is ending,
Be guiding and attending
My way to Your eternal rest.
(LSB 453 st. 1,7)*

In Christ,
Pastor Suggitt

LIFE QUOTES

If your boyfriend or girlfriend won't go to church with you while you are dating, he or she probably won't when you're married either. How long can you keep your faith life going if your spouse thinks praying, Bible reading, and churchgoing are stupid wastes of time? Abraham went to great lengths to find a believing wife for Isaac.

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