

“The Triumph of the Cross”—Colossians 2:13-15

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Triumph of the Cross”, is Colossians 2:13-15 → *You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Christ is risen! He has risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Were you at the ball game the other night? It was great! We were behind by one point with four seconds left on the clock and Frank made a basket from mid-court to win the game for us!” The excitement reflected in these words shines through bright and clear. Frank was the man of the hour because he made the final shot which won the game. However, did you notice how the person saw this shot as winning the game “for us?” Somehow, this person felt this victory was for him even though he didn’t lift a finger to obtain it!

It’s logical to associate triumph with winning some kind of contest,

event or battle. When we do win it shows in our actions (e.g. we celebrate), in our conversations (e.g. we can't wait to share it with others and talk about it for a long time) and even in our countenance (e.g. our smiles are big and lasting). We like being in the "winner's circle."

As disciples of Jesus we can also live victoriously because of our connection to the greatest "Winner" of all—Jesus, the Christ! However, it may hard to think about the cross of Jesus as a symbol of triumph, winning and victory. Defeat in the midst of death, yes. But triumph? Even though the cross appeared to be satan's triumph it was actually his defeat as spoken bout in verse 15 of our text: *Having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them by the cross.*** (NIV)

While these *powers and authorities* can be governmental, institutional and other worldly systems which are corrupted by sin, Ephesians 6:12 says they comprise something far more serious, It says we Christians *do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* Your struggles with human beings are nothing compared to the attacks upon your soul waged by the devil and his minions daily as strives to lead your soul to hell in sin and idolatry. Even if you don't think you're involved in this battle you are . . . so much so that Jesus staked His life on it whether or

not you realize it!

Jesus fought your battle with the power sin and the devil on the cross! He said in John 12:31-32 → *Now—that is, referring to His crucifixion—is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.* Jesus is drawing you to repent of your sins and trust in Him for salvation and new living through His work on the cross, out of which flowed the greatest good ever to come to the world—the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation!

Our connection to this triumphant act on Jesus' part comes to us through His covenant of steadfast love by which He has bound us to Himself. The verse right before our text says that you are *buried with Him in baptism, in which you are also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.* (cf. Colossians 2:12) Just as God bound His people to Himself by the act of circumcision in the Old Testament covenant so He binds us to Himself by the act of baptism. Both symbolize the removal of the old fleshly life in sin and the start of a new life in obedient relationship to God. In baptism we died to sin and now live to God! (cf. Romans 6:3-5)

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The triumph of the cross is also experienced in the empty tomb. His resurrection to which we have been connected leads us to live as people

who are **alive with Christ!** Unfortunately many Christians today live as if they were still “dead.” This is characterized by a lack of excitement for the things of God . . . or by viewing the way of discipleship as a chore rather than a joy . . . or by living in blatant disobedience to His will and commands.

Notice how Paul spoke about this type of behavior or condition in the past tense in verse 13 of our text: *You . . . **were** dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.* For us such walking deadness in sin should be “history” because the resurrection of Jesus is a present reality each day! That’s why verse 13 continues: *You . . . God made alive together with Jesus, having forgiven us all our trespasses!* God made you alive to Him and dead to sin in your baptism! God makes you alive to Him and dead to sin everyday through His Word and Spirit! (cf. Romans 6:11)

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Living triumphantly under the empty cross means that we also view God’s Law in a new light. In the resurrection chapter of Scripture, 1 Corinthians 15:56 says: *The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law.*** A command or law serves as a catalyst to your sinful heart in an effort to produce every kind of rebellion. (cf. Romans 7:7-25) Think about it: When was the last time you were told to do something and at least thought, “Why should I?”, if not react by saying, “Don’t tell me what

to do! Do it yourself!”? Because of your sinful heart God’s commands can become a burden.

However, because of the triumph over the power of sin, death and the devil in the cross by Jesus, the power of sin is taken away as verse 14 of our text says: *Jesus canceled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.* God’s laws are no longer a burden because Jesus took the debt which our sins deserved on Himself! Because of the triumph of the cross and the empty tomb we are people who live with Christ, filled with the love of God which we want to display victoriously toward others. 1 John 5:3-5 says: *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

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As people made alive in Christ by God we can show others this triumph for them by confidently talking about our risen Lord and Savior to them. We can strive to build them up by holding before them the victory and Lordship of Jesus during their trying times. We can show them **humble** love in our actions and words, forgiving them just as in Christ God has unconditionally forgiven us. (cf. Ephesians 4:32)

You see, the real Easter celebration takes place in the heart of each believer who has been made alive with Christ, the Triumphant One. We are made alive in Christ not because of the pretty flowers, nor because of pretty clothes, nor because of the upbeat hymns, but because He makes us alive in Christ through His Word and Sacraments! He takes us out of the “sinner’s circle” and places us in the “Winner’s circle!” It may even make you share it with someone: “Were you at the tomb of Jesus this morning! It was awesome! Just when the devil started rejoicing over Jesus’ death He rose from the dead with a mighty earthquake and won forgiveness of sins and eternal life for us!”

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Thanks be to God,

Who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession,

and through us spreads the fragrance

of the knowledge of Him everywhere.

(2 Corinthians 2:14)

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