**Morning Devotion for Wednesday, April 22, 2020**

**“A Choice of Crosses”**

**Welcome to Morning Devotion at Trinity Lutheran Church.**

**Let us begin our meditation with a quote of the Apostle Paul from his first letter to the congregation in Corinth, chapter one, verses seventeen and eighteen:**

***Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

**The Christian world viewpoint believes that the Easter weekend is the focal point of history. The events that unfolded for Jesus and His followers during these three days are the central and most important historical developments and accomplishments that had ever and will ever occur. In that space and in that time the past, present, and future converged for the benefit of the world and of humanity.**

**This reality, which we Christians have just celebrated, sets before every generation a choice. It is not a choice that can be made by human autonomy, human will, or human decision. In the Christian world viewpoint, God’s human creatures are conceived and born into this world as slaves, slaves to evil and oppressive slave-masters that themselves are incapable of any compassion for the pitiful condition of their subjects. These slave-masters and slave-drivers—Sin and Death—are both directed by and connected to satanic power, a power of one rebellious and unrepentant spirit that is more than the sum of all human ability. The human race is a race enslaved and destined for nothing but continued bondage, unless one more powerful could and would come in redemption.**

**Easter weekend, in the Christian historical reality, is the fulfillment and accomplishment of that redemptive work, the victory over the wicked slave-owner, the freeing of the human soul. On the Day of Preparation (sundown Maundy Thursday to sundown Good Friday), Jesus the Christ celebrated the final Jewish Passover, announced Day One of the New Covenant age, introduced the New Testament Holy Meal, and Himself as both High Priest and Victim was sacrificed as the final offering, the ransom price, His innocent, holy, and precious blood flattening the curve of history by destroying the power of hell, and defeating the effect of sin. Day two, the Day of Sabbath (sundown Good Friday to sundown Saturday), Jesus rested from the most difficult and dangerous work ever, physically and bodily rested His own incorruptible corpse, His soul on a brief sabbatical in Paradise again. Day three, the most important First Day of the Week since creation, (sundown Saturday through sundown Easter Sunday), Jesus was raised from death to forever break the bondage of death. A clean sweep, a complete victory!**

**And since that first Easter weekend, God has provided a way of salvation, of freedom, a road that leads to eternal life. In our own space and time, God comes to each of us in His Gospel, with our own individual redemption. Again, we cannot by**

**our own reason and strength, find and decide and choose and secure and believe in Jesus Christ, but the Holy Spirit call us by the Gospel, baptizes and brings us into**

**the family and kingdom of God. And as we live out the years of our lives here on earth as measured by God, God calls us to live as freedmen and freedwomen, now belonging to Him who is life, love, truth, and goodness. Yet because we live in a fallen world where slavery still exists as an option, and because we still live within the sinful nature with which we are born, the temptation to believe that our former slavery is actually a more desirable and pleasurable life than the new life we have in Christ. . .that temptation stalks and haunts us. The satanic slave masters, like sirens, sing to us that good is evil, evil is good, right is wrong, wrong is right, slavery is freedom, and Christian freedom is actually the worst slavery.**

**In 1834, a German poet named Heinrich Heine (born into a Jewish family, as a young adult converted to Lutheran, but ending up a radical political nationalist who considered all religion superstition) made an astonishing prediction. He wrote that his beloved Germany was in an angry mood, and only one thing was preventing the growing lust for war. That one thing was the cross of Jesus Christ.**

**He no longer believed in the power of the Easter cross. He saw the cross as just another talisman, an object with magical powers. He said, “this cross is now so brittle, and the day is coming when it will pitifully break. Then the old gods of Germany will arise from long-forgotten ruins, rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes, and Thor, leaping to life with his giant hammer, will crush the Gothic cathedrals.**

**In this short devotion, there is not time to tell the whole story, but if you are interested, google two names—Heinrich Heine and add Guido von List. Years later List, a famous Austrian writer, will resurrect pagan worship in Germany to found a cult called Wotanism. As the symbol and talisman for worshipping the ancient German gods (based on a history mostly of his own imagination), he smashed and broke a real cross, and called the twisted cross a swastika. His secret blood society replaced the cross of Christ with the swastika. The perverted ceremonies and Medieval magic of Wotanism appealed to a new generation of radical, political nationalists. In his early days in Vienna, Austria, one of those young politicians named Adolph Hitler knew and admired von List, and later, when the Nazi party was organized the swastika, the twisted cross, was chosen as their symbol. Soon the German people found themselves standing between two competing crosses.**

**This is the story of every generation. In our own space and time, there are many, alternative, twisted crosses that invite each of you to call evil good and good evil, that make wrong right and name right wrong, that try to convince you that Christianity is the real slavery and invite you to return to the bondage of sin.**

**We conclude the words of one Rosemaria Von Trapp, one of the famous “Sound of Music” children, who wrote the following words about her Christian parents, the Baron Georg and Maria Von Trapp, who opposed the Nazis and left their home to save their lives: “Hitler gave us a symbol he called freedom, hope, and power. His cross had hooks on it. Our Christian faith had given us a cross of peace, of total sacrificial love, of resurrection to new life. My father and mother refused to fly the flag of the glossy cross with hooks on it, and chose the cross of Christ.” May God bless you and your household on this day. Cling, cling, to the cross of Christ!**