

August 27&28 “The Two-Sided Cross”

I read a story this week about a church that wanted to increase their attendance so they hired a powerful advertising agency to come in and make recommendations. After lots of research they came to one conclusion; get rid of all the crosses in the church. They figured that crosses gave a negative message to young people who might worship. Take away the cross from a church and it becomes like a meeting room at a Holiday Inn.

Their recommendation is one of those politically correct responses we see around us. We are told not to pray the Lord’s Prayer in public, not to place mangers at Christmas, not to take the Bible as truth, not to believe that God created the world, and to preach watered- down sermons without the need for the cross. The world wants an easy going, non- threatening religion that’s easy to take. Fast and easy is what we’re all about.

Comedian Yakov Smirnoff tells of his early days in America. “On my first shopping trip

I saw powdered milk — you just add water and you get milk. I saw powdered orange juice

— you just add water and you have orange juice. Then I saw baby powder, and thought to

myself, what a country!” I guess we’d like a powdered religion we could find in a store;

add a little wine, and BAM, forgiveness. Doesn’t work that way; we need the cross.

As we read the Word of God this weekend in Matthew 16, Jesus tells His disciples to follow not the ways of the world. Take up the cross, not hide it or get rid of it, but take it up and follow Him. Please notice that the cross has two sides; one with Jesus hanging there and the other, the empty side, reminding us that Jesus has risen. Crucified — Risen... Crucified - Risen. One side tells of pain while the other tells of the peace we have. One side shows evil while the other eternity. One side is sad while the other shows security. One side is bloody while the other a blessing, and one side of loss and the other of love.

The cross of Christ is at the center of it all. Jesus took our many sins upon Himself so His blood could wash them away and bring all who believe in Him forgiveness and new life on earth and in heaven. The cross is there to tell each of us that we are loved and no matter what we’ve ever done, Jesus is there to forgive us and welcome us into His family. The cross is God’s message given for you, to you, promising that He will never let you go. The cross shows us that God loves each of us so much, He was willing to sacrifice His Only Son so we could have a home with Him in heaven.

Because God Is Good.. .All The Time, He holds up the cross and tells us that when we are in pain, there is peace with Jesus. When we have done evil, forgiveness and eternity awaits. When we are sad, we have the security in His arms. When life leaves us bloody and beat up, He is there to bless us. And when we face a loss, He is there with His love. None of this would be ours without the cross. Do you want to get rid of that? Amen... .pastor matthews